Indira Gandhi National Open University
Division of Distance Education

# DE-1
# GROWTH AND PHILOSOPHY OF DISTANCE EDUCATION

## Socio-academic Issues

3

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Indira Gandhi National Open University
Division of Distance Education

# DE-1
# Growth and Philosophy of Distance Education

Block

3

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# Course 1 Growth and Philosophy of Distance Education


**Block 1 Distance Education—Growth and Present Status**

Unit 1 Historical Perspective
Unit 2 The International Scene 1
Unit 3 The International Scene 2
Unit 4 The Indian Scene

**Block 2 Distance Education—Philosophical Foundations**

Unit 1 Defining Distance Education
Unit 2 Philosophical Foundations 1
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**Block 3 Distance Education—Socio-academic Issues**

Unit 1 Socio-political Issues
Unit 2 Academic Issues
Unit 3 Socio-academic Credibility
Unit 4 Micro and Macro Issues

# LET US BEGIN HERE

The course on the theme of the **Growth and Philosophy of Distance Education** is divided into three Blocks. This is the third of them. It comprises four Units in all. A schematic representation of the design of Units is given below.

**Unit X**

X.0 Objectives
X.1 Introduction
X.2 Section 1 (Main Theme)
X.2.1 Sub-section 1 of Section 1
X.2.2 Sub-section 2 of Section 1

Check Your Progress

X.3 Section 2 (Main Theme)
X.3.1 Sub-section 1 of Section 2
X.3.2 Sub-section 2 of Section 2

Check Your Progress

X.n Let Us Sum Up

Check Your Progress: Model Answers

As the scheme suggests, we have divided the Units into sections for easy reading and better comprehension. Each section is indicated distinctly by **BOLD CAPITALS** and each sub-section by relatively **smaller but bold** typeface. The significant divisions within sub-sections are in **still smaller bold** typeface so as to make it easier for you to see their place within sub-sections, and the items which need to be highlighted are numbered [i.e. (i), (ii), etc.]. For purposes of uniformity we have employed the same scheme of 'partitioning' in every Unit throughout the Course.

We begin each Unit with the section 'Objectives'. It articulates briefly

- what we have presented in the Unit, and
- what we expect from you once you complete working on the Unit.

In the last section of each Unit, under the heading, 'Let Us Sum Up', we summarise the whole Unit for puposes of recapitulation and ready reference.

Besides, we have given self-check exercises under the caption 'Check Your Progress' at a few places in each Unit which invariably ends with model answers to the questions set in the exercises.

What, perhaps you would do is to go through the Units and jot down important points, as you read, at the space provided in the margin. This will help you keep track of and assimilate what you have been reading in a Unit, answer the self-check exercises and the assignment questions and easily identify the item(s) to be clarified.

We hope that we have given enough space for you to work on the self-check exercises. The purpose of giving self-check exercises will be served satisfactorily if you compare your answers with the model ones given at the end of each Unit, after having written your answers in the blank space. **You may be tempted to have a furtive glance at the model answer(s),** as soon as you come across an exercise. But we do hope that you will overcome the temptation and turn to model answers (which are not the best answers necessarily) only after you write yours.

In essence, these exercises are **not** meant to be submitted to us for correction or evaluation. The exercises are to function as study tools to help you keep on the right track as you read the Units.

At an average each **Block** has at least one assignment which should be sent to us for evaluation. In all, you may have to work on two/three assignments for a **Course**.

We suggest the following norms to be strictly practised while you are working through the assignments.

- Write your roll number legibly as indicated in the "Participants' Programme Guide".
- Before you put down anything in words, assimilate what you have read, integrate it with what you have gathered from your experience and feed them into your answer.
- Make the best use of the Block and the additional reading materials for diligently working through the assignment.

# BLOCK 3 SOCIO-ACADEMIC ISSUES

In blocks 1 and 2 respectively, we tried to acquaint you with the growth and philosophical basis of distance education. We noticed that distance education has achieved worldwide currency in a relatively short period of time, and also that it is an educational phenomenon that has sound thinking behind it.

Having done so, we must now converge our attention to the socio-educational problems of our own country. That is, we must try to identify and assess the utility and possibilities of distance education for our special problems without losing sight of our unique socio-cultural circumstances which distinguish us from other societies of the world. The socio-educational problems of India are many and myriad. We do not intend to talk about all of them. That is just not possible. However, in this Block we have taken up four issues which from our point of view deserve detailed discussions.

The issues we have taken up are:

i) Given our economic situation, is there any socio-political justification for switching over to distance education as a reformative educational strategy?
ii) Assuming that our answer to the above question is 'Yes', what degree of academic credibility does this reformative strategy claim in our country today and what does it actually deserve?
iii) If distance education has the kind of academic credibility which it deserves as an educational strategy, can it claim to be a discipline by itself the way, for example, 'education' is?
iv) If we accept distance education both as a reformative educational strategy and a discipline, what micro and macro problems is it faced with? Which of the two (micro or macro) is our major concern in this Diploma Programme?

We shall devote a Unit to each of these issues. In order to keep our discussion down-to-earth, we propose to deal with the first two issues with the help of two case studies, the third issue through a discussion, and the fourth, with specific references to the current status of distance education in India.

# UNIT 1 SOCIO-POLITICAL ISSUES

## Contents


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1.1 Introduction
1.2 The Problem of 'Numbers'
  1.2.1 Increasing the number of specialist institutions
  1.2.2 Operating the "multiplier effect"
1.3 The Problem of 'Relevance'
  1.3.1 Generalistic type training courses
  1.3.2 Need for a relevant training course
  1.3.3 A relevant training programme—basic considerations
1.4 Let Us Sum Up


## 1.0 OBJECTIVES

In this Unit, we attempt to answer the question, whether or not there is any socio-political justification for us to switch over to distance education as **a reformative** educational strategy, with the help of a case study. We have taken an actual case well rooted in our socio-educational structure and tried to arrive at an answer in the context of the Indian situation.

Our assumption is that after you have gone through this Unit, you will be able to:

- arrive at the conclusion that distance education is capable of resolving some of the outstanding socio-political issues which the institution of education in India is currently faced with, and
- apply the approach we followed in this Unit to study an educational situation which you may be familiar with or interested in and we believe that you will come to the same conclusions as we have. (However, our belief should not be counted as the final say on this issue!)

## 1.1 INTRODUCTION

Distance education is an educational phenomenon that is under constant scrutiny. Besides political issues like allocation of funds to establish new educational institutions so as to meet the growing demand for education, production of socially relevant courses to fulfil social needs etc., cultural and academic biases demand socio-political justification for our switching over to distance education as an effective reformative system. To give socio-political justification and substantiate that distance education is a reformative educational strategy, we have referred to a case study.*

The specific 'case' we intend to study in the first two Units is that of English Language Teaching (ELT), with our focus on Teacher Training in this area of our educational endeavour. It should be noted here that we do not intend to argue for the need for trained teachers, which has since been recognised, nor do we need to re-establish the fact that the majority of the teachers engaged in English Language Teaching (ELT) at various levels are untrained, in spite of the efforts put in during the past three decades. Instead, we shall endeavour to identify those socio-cultural constraints which the institution of teacher training (in the area of ELT) is a victim of. We shall limit our discussion to two major problems which the institution is faced with:

i) the problem of ever growing 'numbers' that need to be trained, and
ii) the 'relevance' of the training programmes.

The fact that emerges out of this discussion is that these problems have remained, and

* The case study is referred to, as it has topical relevance to us. That is, the discussion on the case study should not be taken in pejorative sense.

will continue to remain intractable mainly because of the "unconscious culturally induced bias(es)" (UCIB), which the teacher-trainers and decision-makers suffer from. Will distance education answer such problems? We shall look into these issues with the help of a study of the teacher training programme of the Central Institute of English and Foreign Languages* (CIEFL), Hyderabad.

## 1.2 THE PROBLEM OF 'NUMBERS'

Before we launch ourselves into the issue of the astronomical number of teachers to be trained, we shall briefly touch upon the history of the specialist teacher training institutes.

The first English Language Teaching Institute (ELTI) was established in Allahabad in 1954, and the last, called the State Institute of Language Studies, Rajasthan, in 1966. In between 8 more institutes which include the CIEFL were set up in various parts of the country. The year-wise break up is given in the following table.

| Year | No. of Institutes established |
|---|---|
| 1956 | 1 |
| 1958 | 1 |
| 1962 | 1 |
| 1963 | 3 |
| 1964 | 1 |
| 1965 | 2 |
| 1966 | 1 |

**Table 1: Specialist Institutes: a year-wise break up**

It may be noted (Table 1) that all these institutes were set up within a period of ten years between 1956 and 1966, and there has been no further addition since 1966. This position is not likely to change in the near future. For statistical purposes, we may assume that all the institutes started functioning in 1963. Having noted the number of specialised institutes which were set up primarily with a view to improving and up-dating the human resources, you may be also interested in knowing whether or not this target has been accomplished. We begin this discussion with a quotation from the **Supplementary Note on the Priorities and Strategies of CIEFL (1978).**

"i) Approximate number of teachers of English in secondary and middle schools in the country (on the basis of the number of high schools and middle schools given in the Times of India Directory and Year Book, 1978) — 4,00,000
ii) Teachers trained by ELTIs/RIEs** on their regular courses — 10,610
iii) Teachers trained by ELTIs through their campaign centres/ short courses — 1,02,926
iv) Teachers trained at CIEFL on the regular courses who can be utilised as resource persons — 925
v) Teachers trained by CIEFL on short-term courses — 1,044"

These data may be summarised as follows:

i) The total number of teachers to be trained — 4,00,000
ii) The number of teachers trained on regular courses at ELTIs, RIEs and CIEFL—(ii + iv) above — 11,535 (10610 + 925)
iii) The number of teachers trained through campaign centres, extension services and short courses—(iii + v) above — 1,03,970 (1,02,926 + 1,044)
iv) Total number of teachers trained till 1978 — 1,15,505 (11,535 + 1,03,970)

* Central Institute of English and Foreign Languages was established in 1958 with a view to training teachers of English and promoting research in the area of English Language Teaching.

** RIEs: Regional Institutes of English.

Assuming that training given at ELTIs, RIEs and the CIEFL is relevant to the needs of the country, and therefore, effective, we notice that till 1978 the country trained near about 26% of the target population of 4,00,000 school teachers. (That is, our national effort spread over a period of 15 years (1963-78) completed only 26% of the total task.)

If we kept the number of teachers constant and worked at the same rate as we did during the fifteen years from 1963 to 1978, it should not be difficult to reach the level of saturation—train all the untrained teachers—by about 2023 AD, i.e., in about 45 years, from 1978 AD to 2023 AD. However, if we follow the line of argument presented in the **Supplementary Note,** we shall arrive at a more accurate figure.

The **Supplementary Note** further adds that "these ..... are approximate figures arrived at on the basis of 4 teachers of English for every high school and 2 teachers for every middle school. The number of schools is based on the figures given in **Education in India** published by the Union Ministry of Education in 1978. As these figures relate to 1971-72 we have assumed an increase of 20% in the number of schools since then".

If the number of schools increases at the rate of 20% every seven years, the number of the teachers of English 45 years hence (counting from 1978, the period required to train all the teachers, at the present rate of training, if their number did not change) should be $4,00,000\left(\frac{1+20}{100}\right)^{\frac{45}{7}}$ i.e. 13,13,839. To extend the argument, 13,13,839 teachers, when trained at the rate of 1,15,505 teachers in every fifteen years (see above) will take $\frac{15\times 1313839}{1,15,505}$ i.e. 171 years to get trained one and all. Such a state of affairs is not desirable for obvious reasons—in 171 years, the number of teachers will come to be an astronomical figure.

**Solutions**

There appear to be three possible solutions to this problem:

i) increasing the number of ELTIs in the country;
ii) producing resource persons at the existing ELTIs, and use them for 'multiplier effect'; and
iii) using distance education techniques for training teachers all over the country.

We shall discuss the first two of these alternative solutions one by one in the above order. The discussion helps us in arriving at a conclusion regarding the third alternative solution.

### 1.2.1 Increasing the number of specialist institutes

It must be noted right in the beginning that increasing **the capacity** of the existing ELTIs is not different from increasing the number of ELTIs, as both the solutions are based on the premise that for teacher training programmes to be effective, the growth in the capacity for training teachers must be proportionate to the growth in the number of teachers who need to be trained. But then, how much would be the budgetary increase? In what follows, we give you a rough estimate of the likely increase in the budgetary provisions in order to meet the existing needs.

Let us assume that we should train all the teachers of English by the end of this century. On the basis of:

i) 21 years reckoned from 1978 to 1999, and
ii) 4,00,000 being the number of teachers involved in ELT in 1978.

The number of teachers then, i.e. in 1999 A.D. at the rate of 20% increase every seven years will be $4,00,000\left(\frac{1+20}{100}\right)^{21/7}$ i.e. 6,92,000.

Of these, 1,15,505 teachers have already been trained (see page 9). The number to be trained therefore, is 692000−115505 = 576495/21 = 27452 teachers in a year. Moreover, the average of teachers trained in one year during a period of 15 years (i.e., from 1963 to 1978) is 115505/15 = 7,700. Briefly, in order to train 27,452 teachers

every year till 1999, the budgetary provisions will have to be increased nearly four-fold (27452/7700 = 3.6).

Keeping in view the extent of "social over investment in higher education" in India, a four-fold increase in the budgetary provision for only a part of our overall educational programme cannot be justified on economic grounds. The conclusion is that any attempt to expand the existing training centres, or to increase the number of such centres, and impart teacher training with the help of traditional modes of training is economically forbidding, and therefore, not possible. The fact that no new ELTIs have been established since 1966 supports this conclusion substantially. Having found the first solution non-viable, we shall now look into the second alternative.

### 1.2.2 Operating "multiplier effect"

In this sub-section we shall discuss the notion of "multiplier effect" and arrive at a conclusion regarding its effectiveness in this particular case.

This solution of producing multiplier effect has been tried by most ELTIs, including the CIEFL, for quite some time now. It was thought that teacher training on a large scale would certainly require new ways of training teachers and this could be done on a 'pyramid' system. That is, a thorough training of at least an academic year's duration in how to train teacher-trainers can be given to a relatively small body of people who will be later used for training teachers. This process will continue till the untrained teachers are trained. This notion of the 'multiplier effect' of training given at the specialist institutes is based on the following three assumptions:

i) That the teacher working in actual classroom situations can perform better if training of whatever kind is made available to him. He must get the label 'trained', which is enough to make him proficient in his vocation.
ii) That a 'thorough' training of a year's duration at a specialist ELTI for example the CIEFL, Hyderabad, necessarily transforms a trainee into a teacher-trainer, whatever the trainee's personal attributes, or the content of the courses.
iii) That there is a ready made academic infrastructure which will accommodate all the available teacher-trainers in order to effect the 'multiplier effect'.

How strong are these assumptions? We shall discuss them below with the help of relevant references to the **Supplementary Note on the Priorities and Strategies of CIEFL (1978)**. But, let us work out an exercise.

**Check Your Progress 1**

Define 'multiplier effect', in not more than 12 lines.

**Notes:** a) Space is given below for your answer.

b) Compare your answer with the one given at the end of this Unit (p. 21).

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We shall now discuss the validity of the assumptions made above [see items (i)-(iii)]. We have clubbed together the first two items (i & ii) as they are essentially dealing with 'training programmes'. Briefly, we shall be looking at the validity of these assumptions under two headings—training programmes and academic infrastructure.

**(Short) Training Programmes—a misnomer**

The **Supplementary Note** admits the fact that the quality of training (short course/training at campaign centres) has not been uniformly satisfactory. However, it has not been made explicitly clear as to why the quality of training was not satisfactory uniformly. It might be that it was not well organised, or may be the very content of training was irrelevant.

Organisational flaws can be mended once they get identified, but if the content of training is irrelevant it may not be easy to pinpoint it, because most often short courses given by specialist institutes (ELTIs etc.) are miniature replicas of their regular courses. (We shall talk about this problem of relevance in greater detail in section 1.3). Short courses, at times, might do more harm than good. Consider the following:

"What **must not happen** is for the student (the student-teacher) to think that the lecturer (the trainer-teacher) is demonstrating how he expects 40 minutes to be filled. This point is particularly important for demonstrations given on **short vacation** courses by visiting lecturers, especially if these visitors come from other countries and have only a limited knowledge of the conditions in which the teachers they are lecturing have to operate." (Forrester, 1974: emphasis added.)

And again:

"On any course, there are teachers from a variety of backgrounds who will teach in very different schools, and **the demonstrations should be varied** to help all kinds of teachers. But those who most need help are those from the 'deprived areas'. They are the ones who get most discouraged..." (Forrester, 1974: emphasis added.)

Obviously, it is not possible to present varied demonstrations in short training programmes, and the victims are "those who most need help". To overcome this difficulty it might be suggested that we should increase the number of demonstrations and TP (teaching practice) sessions at the cost of theory classes.

But then, how do we reconcile this solution with the view that the teaching practice which is corroborated by a coherent theory is the best one and this kind of teaching practice is a central part of both pre-service and in-service training? Can we then do away with teaching practice in short-term courses? It is a ticklish issue. Conveniently, therefore, the specialist institutes attempt to effect an unproportionate amalgam of both theory and practice. This unproportionate amalgam results in disintegrating the very purpose of the courses.

Is not, therefore, a short teacher-training programme of doubtful utility? It undoubtedly is when seen from the idealistic point of view. Lee (1974) says,

"I see no reason why the prospective graduate teacher of English as a foregin language should not commit himself at the beginning of the under-graduate stage (as doctors, dentists or engineers) are committed to their profession from the time they enter the university, and their courses are both practical and theoretical throughout, the centre of interest being practice. It is recognised that, although doubtless it would be better to have hastily trained doctors than no doctors at all, adequate training takes time and should not be rushed."

Supplementary or refresher courses may be short, but then they do not constitute training, they come only 'subsequently'. One of the facts that emerge from this discussion is that short courses cannot assume the role of 'full' training courses. At best, they can serve as supplementary aids, and it is unwise to mistake a refresher course for 'training'. A refresher course is valid only if the trainee has already had his 'full' training. To label a teacher who attends a two-day training programme, or for that matter a two-month programme, as 'trained' is to make a mockery of 'training'. It is true that the duration of a training course is only one of the many factors that influence 'training', but it has direct implications for other factors like the content of training, the quality of training, or the strategy used for training. If the 'duration' is not adequate, the rest cannot be so either. In other words, there is no mini-training

that can effect actual 'training'. However, we do not deny mini-training programmes their legitimate roles, but those roles have not to be mistaken for the roles of 'full' training courses.

With these arguments in view, the data presented on page 10 assume an altogether different complexion—excluding those who were trained at short training programmes during the fifteen years, from 1963 to 1978, we are left with just 11535 (10610+925) teachers of English who may claim to have received adequate training, i.e. only 3% of the teachers (as in 1978) were actually trained by 1978. In other words, only a paltry 11,535 were trained out of a total of 4,00,000 teachers.

Of the above mentioned 11,535 fully trained teachers, 925 are said to be resource persons/teacher-trainers (see item (iv), page 10). These are the teachers trained at the CIEFL. It is difficult to see why of all the trained teachers, these 925, should be labelled 'resource persons', unless we accept the view that they are so by virtue of the kind of institution they have been trained at, and logically, therefore, of the kind of training they have gone through. We may accept this view, but it gets belied the moment we turn to the system of grading which the institute under consideration follows for purposes of awarding its diplomas and certificates. Every year about 5% of the trainees score an overall A grade (the highest in the system) and there are quite a few who score D grade (the lowest). Of the rest, some score B grade and the remaining C grade.

A 'resource person' should be what the expression implies, i.e., a 'resource person', and not a very sound 'resource person' or a weak 'resource person', for what good is a weak 'resource person'!

If it were just the kind of institutes that one attends, and the kind or length of training that one undergoes, which produced a 'resource person', there would be no A grades as against D grades. Obviously, there is something to the 'person' as well, which of course, may either be identified or both identified and sharpened by a particular kind of institute or training. This 'something' could be the personal attributes of a trainee. That is, a person's age, maturity, personality and temperament, intelligence, personal education, motivation for becoming a teacher, etc. contribute to his success or failure in his target. These 'attributes' will also determine, at least in part, how successful the training will be and what sort of a 'resource person' the trainee will become.

It might be that the possession of this 'something' is what lets one score an A. Others who lack it fail to do so. (It should not, however, be construed that we contribute to the idea that an A grade trainee is a sound 'resource person' necessarily, but that, no doubt, is what the institute results suggest.) Following this line of argument it should not be difficult to see that so far the Institute has produced not 925 'resource persons' but at the most 50 genuine 'resource persons', that is about 5% of the total number of people who have been trained at the Institute so far. The fallacy that every trainee who passes out of an institute like this is a 'resource person' not only builds resistance against reform but also makes a myth of the much talked about 'multiplier effect' of such training.

**Should an A grade trainee necessarily be a sound 'resource person'?**

Every trainee who scores an A grade at the CIEFL need not necessarily be a sound 'resource person'. This view emerges from an analysis of the content and examination pattern of the major course given at the CIEFL (PG Diploma in the Teaching of English). The course is mainly theoretical. It has been so, for years now.

It is not difficult to see that a high grade can be scored by someone who is well prepared with the theory part of the course. However, not only the stronger claim that the institute produces 'resource person' but also the weaker claim that it produces trained teachers is not entirely unquestionable, for note the following observation:

"If the training is to be practical in its outcome, it must be centered on language-teaching tasks and should be directed by those who have had plentiful first-hand experience of them: unless both these conditions are fulfilled, the relevance of the theory is likely to remain in doubt and much of it will be above the trainees' heads. Both on the practical and on the theoretical side plenty of time is needed for the absorption of knowledge and the development of teaching skills." (Lee, 1974)

We may then conclude that the teacher training course under consideration, at best, is in the nature of 'the information component' at the cost of 'the skills component'.

Keeping the above discussion in view, we may now say that by 1978 the country managed to have 10,610 'informed' teachers, and 925 somewhat 'better informed' teachers of English—only 'better informed' not 'trained'.

**Non-existence of the academic infrastructure to effect the 'multiplier effect'**

Only one ELTI, nemely the RIE, Bangalore has well organised campaign centres, which use the services of the people trained at the institute. The remaining nine ELTIs, including the CIEFL, Hyderabad, leave their produce, i.e. the trained teachers, to their own destiny. These 'teacher-trainers' hardly ever find any channels to train teachers. Most often they go back to their own institutions and continue teaching English the way they had done before they were trained, because the constraints set by the attitudes of other colleagues and students, the teaching materials and examination patterns singly or collectively do not allow them to work differently.

We have tried to show that the courses given are called **training courses** only because there is a long tradition of calling them so. These courses are essentially generalistic in nature, they are professed to suit all kinds of trainees, and all the teaching/learning situations, but they fail to show any positive results, as those who take these courses fail to put their 'training' to any productive use.

Consequently there is no 'multiplier effect' whatsoever, for, the infrastructure that could help in producing that effect does not exist. And what is being attempted by the RIE, Bangalore, by means of the kind of infrastructure they have built for the purpose is not effective either, for their campaign centres cannot but give short training courses, the weaknesses of which have already been commented on (see pages 13-14). This explains why the second solution, namely the strategy of producing resource persons at key institutes to produce 'multiplier effect' subsequently, has not succeeded so far, and may not succeed in the future either.

The foregoing discussion, thus, brings to light the following:

i) the number of teachers to be trained is large and the period of time we may need to train them one and all will be unbelievably long,
ii) increasing the number of ELTIs would mean a phenomenal increase in the budgetary provisions and by implication it is uneconomical, and
iii) the kind of training available at the ELTIs is unsatisfactory and irrelevant to the needs.

These being the bottlenecks, what we may need immediately is a 'relevant' teacher training programme which should cater to the diverse needs of the teachers. Obviously, the only possibility is to opt for the third alternative solution that we mentioned earlier (see page 11).

Before we discuss this issue at length, we shall first take up the issue of 'relevance'.

**Check Your Progress 2**

Give at least two reasons why the ELTIs do not succeed in effecting the 'multiplier effect'.

**Notes:** a) Space is given below for your answer.
b) Compare your answer with the one given at the end of this Unit (page 21).

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## 1.3 THE PROBLEM OF 'RELEVANCE'

This problem of 'relevance' is primarily concerned with the 'concept' of teacher-training as it is understood in our country currently.

The concept of teacher-training espoused by the specialists at present is a part of the British educational legacy which we have not ventured to give up. The usual practice is still the same as followed by the British Universities., i.e. a three-year degree course the content of which is not closely associated with language teaching followed by a 'teacher-training year'. It should be noted that the British graduate gets trained to teach his own mother tongue, but the Indian graduate is handicapped on this account. Coming to the specialist institutions like ELTIs etc., the story is no different. The staff in these institutions are either directly or indirectly accultured by 'resource countries' (England, for example) which have nothing to offer on the specific problems of teaching English in our country.

The influence of the British practices, with regard to teaching practice, is manifest in the low priority given to teaching practice at the ELTIs. And this affirms the fact that the teacher-training programmes currently available are unsatisfactory. It is also clear then that the 'concept' of teacher-training—as far as the significance of TP (Teaching Practice) is concerned—upheld by our specialist bodies is a result of a culturally induced bias. Over the years, this bias has been transferred to the trainees too. Most trainees, like the specialist bodies, think that it is just one generalistic type of teacher-training that can serve them all, whatever their specific needs. Needless to say that such training courses as aim at catering to the needs of one and all should fail to serve any at all.

We shall substantiate this observation with the help of a survey, which shows that in spite of the efforts put in by the specialist institutes the courses remain ineffective.

### 1.3.1 Generalistic type training courses

Every second teacher in a group of 246 in-service teachers who joined the Post-graduate Certificate Course in the Teaching of English (PGCTE) given by the CIEFL through correspondence in 1976, and every fourth in a group of 527 who joined the said course in 1979 were contacted through a questionnaire. The two samples thus acquired consisted of 123 and 131 teachers respectively. [Of the total 254 (123 + 131) teachers only 205 sent back their responses, and not all of them responded to all the questions set in the questionnaire.]

As the eligibility restriction would have it, all these 205 teachers have a Master's degree in English literature. It is interesting to note that our **qualified** teachers working at different levels of instruction and responsible to differing types of student should look up to one and the same type of generalistic training. There appear to be two possible reasons for such a 'rush' for generalistic type of training.

i) The teachers are not fully aware of the nature of their respective needs (for example, the needs of a teacher trainee, working in a B.Ed. college cannot be the same as those of his counterpart working in a professional college like a medical or an engineering college on the one hand, and a primary school or a post-graduate department of English on the other).
ii) They might know exactly what kind of training they need, but are helpless because none but the generalistic type is available. (In this latter case, it is the fault of the key training centres that they have not realised what the needs of their clientele are, or if they have, they are not willing to or have no means to fulfil them.)

In either case the training given and taken cannot be relevant to one and all.

### 1.3.2 Need for a relevant training course

The teachers who join the generalistic type courses may have differing motivations. For instance, those working at post-graduate departments may have joined the course because of sheer curiosity, or it may be that their department introduced a paper involving some linguistics or phonetics which they would like to get introduced to through these courses. Those working at the primary level may be looking for better jobs. Those in the professional colleges look for quality improvement. Consider what

one of the respondents to the questionnaire has to say of the Quality Improvement Programme.

".... I would point out that in polytechnics the programmes are set to improve the quality of technical teachers, but the non-technical teachers and particularly the lecturers in English, are not considered for Quality Improvement Programmes. However, I do not know the exact reasons behind it. I feel, I may perhaps (be) the only teacher from a polytechnic who has on his own accord got admission to the course in language teaching."

'Quality improvement' is equated with 'training in language teaching', which ostensibly is so, but 'what kind of training' for 'what purpose'?

It might be argued that more than 93% of these teachers, i.e., 192 out of 205, teach at the school and the college levels, and, therefore, if these two levels are catered to, the generality of the course under consideration is more than justified. But, is that true? Can there be a teacher training course general enough to cater to the needs of teachers working at the school, the intermediate and the degree levels all at once?

What follows is the abstract of the information we collected through the questionnaire from these 192 teachers with a view to emphasising the fact that teachers working at the three different levels under consideration need differing training courses. Besides, we would like to show that a single generalised course for the teachers working at different levels can prove harmful.

**An analysis of (Table 2: see page 18) shows that the training programme we have been talking about needs to be improved.**

Column A

The average strength of a general English class at the intermediate level is almost two times that at the school level, and that at the degree level the average strength is much more than that at the intermediate level. The majority of the learners at all the three levels come from classes in which a regional language is used as the medium of instruction. A greater percentage of learners at the high school level comes from poorer sections of our society and at the graduate level this percentage tilts in favour of the middle income (lower) group.

Column B

Most of the teaching materials used at the high school level are based on selected and graded vocabulary and graded structures. Such is not always the case at the intermediate level, at which only a small percentage of teaching materials is based on some kind of 'selection' and 'gradation'. At the degree level, however, these criteria do not find any place in course construction. Coming to the themes presented in the language tests, we notice that they are, in a majority of the cases, inappropriate to the socio-cultural background of the learners.

Column C

Most teachers at all the three levels of instruction are not aware of the 'aims' of the curriculum at their respective levels, and a majority of them think that their classrooms are not properly equipped for purposes of ELT. And the basis of this view, in a majority of the cases , is that audio-visual aids are not available. Again, most of the teachers think that it is the learner who is the more important factor as far as the activity of ELT is concerned, and they use 'translation' as the major ELL (English Language Learning) strategy in their classrooms.

Column D

A vast majority of the trained teachers who work at the intermediate and the degree levels think that their training at the CIEFL is not relevant to their needs.

**Comments**

It appears legitimate to train high school teachers to teach classes of about 50 students, and college teachers to handle about 90 students in a class. However, since the number of students in a class is not predictable at either level in the Indian situation, the trainees might be trained to handle a variety of class-sizes. At present they are talked to about this variety in class-sizes but actual training to cater to this

Table 2: Differing ELT/L situations at different levels of instruction

| Data from teachers working at | | | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Degree level | | Intermediate level | | Sec. School level | | | | |
| 1979 | 1976 | 1979 | 1976 | 1979 | 1976 | | | |
| **30** | **26** | **32** | **38** | **18** | **19** | **No. of teachers who contributed the data:** | **Composition: any one class/teacher** | **Column: A** |
| 87.4 | 87.0 | 75.0 | 76.0 | 39.0 | 39.1 | Strength of the class-average | | |
| 16% | 21% | 22% | 24% | 10% | 14% | Students from the Engg. medium schools | | |
| 84% | 79% | 78% | 76% | 90% | 86% | From regional med. schools | | |
| 51% | 55% | 37% | 42% | 24% | 39% | From lower med. class families | | |
| 49% | 45% | 63% | 58% | 76% | 61% | From poor families: income < Rs. 500.00 per month. | | |
| **17** | **19** | **27** | **31** | **15** | **15** | No. of teachers who responded: | **Nature of teaching materials used:** | **Column: B** |
| 0%<br>100% | 0%<br>100% | 30%<br>70% | 35%<br>65% | 87%<br>13% | 87%<br>13% | YES<br>NO — Selected Vocabulary | | |
| 0%<br>100% | 0%<br>100% | 30%<br>70% | 35%<br>65% | 87%<br>13% | 87%<br>13% | YES<br>NO — Graded Vocabulary | | |
| 0%<br>12%<br>88% | 0%<br>20%<br>80% | 30%<br>37%<br>63% | 35%<br>18%<br>82% | 80%<br>0%<br>100% | 54%<br>12%<br>88% | With graded structures & themes appropriate to the SC* BG* of the learner — Yes / No | | |
| 100%<br>0%<br>100% | 100%<br>0%<br>100% | 70%<br>21%<br>19% | 65%<br>20%<br>80% | 20%<br>0%<br>100% | 46%<br>14%<br>86% | Without graded structures & themes appropriate to the SC* BG* of the learner — Yes / No | | |
| Aver-age % | **25** | **20** | **32** | **37** | **19** | **18** | No. of teachers who responded: | |
| 27%<br>73% | 24%<br>76% | 20%<br>80% | 28%<br>72% | 41%<br>59% | 26%<br>74% | 22%<br>78% | YES<br>NO — Knowledge of the curricular aims | |
| 63%<br>93.7% | 4%<br>96% | 10%<br>90% | 6%<br>94% | 8%<br>92% | 5%<br>95% | 5%<br>95% | YES<br>NO — Classroom fully equipped | |
| 1.5% | 4% No. lib | | 3% | | | | Personal affair | **Bases for the responses for no** |
| 2.2%<br>2.5%<br>14.5%<br>72% | 4%<br>12%<br>76% | 5%<br>25%<br>60% | 6%<br>15%<br>62% | 3%<br>5%<br>24%<br>60% | 11%<br>84% | 5%<br>89% | Bad materials & methods<br>Students unwilling<br>Large classes<br>Aids not available | |
| 5%<br>1.5% AVA av. | 4% AVA available | 10% BB,B &R; | 6% BB,B; &R; | 3% L 5% BB,&B | 5% AVA available | 5% T | T=Teacher; AVA=AV Aids<br>L=Lecture; BB=Black Bd.<br>B=Books; R=Room | **for yes** |
| 67.3%<br>19.3%<br>13.3% | 72%<br>12%<br>16% | 60%<br>30%<br>10% | 56%<br>25%<br>19% | 65%<br>16%<br>19% | 84%<br>5%<br>11% | 76%<br>28%<br>5% | L=Learner<br>T=Teacher<br>B=Both | **The more important factor in ELT/L** |
| 90.5% | 75% | 78% | 97% | 94% | 100% | 99% | Translation the most common teaching strategy | |
| | **15** | **18** | **26** | **28** | **14** | **13** | **No. of teachers who responded:** | **Column: D** |
| *Gr=Grammar | 33% Mainly self improvement+ (Teaching of Gr*) | 39% | 46% | 39% | 78% | 85% | The training is useful Reasons | **Usefulness of training in ELT. [CIEFL & Special case]** |
| | 100% Exam types, Student type, course content & requirement | 94% | 96% Exams; class composition; Course requirement. | 93% | 71% Exams; Student aims; Student type, | 73% | The training is not useful Reasons | |

*SC=socio-cultural
*BG=back ground

'variety' is not available. Secondly, the types of students available for 'practice teaching' sessions in large towns, that is where all the ten specialist training centres are situated, do not constitute samples of the types the trainees have to face in the actual situation—the 'disadvantaged' sections of the society. Thirdly, the type of teaching materials used at the school and the college levels are distinctly different from each other. If teacher training includes training in using teaching materials, there is need for providing differing teaching skills to teachers working at differing levels of instruction. Besides, if the teacher himself is convinced that the themes presented in the texts do not conform to the socio-cultural background of learners, it is difficult to visualise how the learners' interest or imagination might be aroused or captured by such texts. A generalistic type of training cannot, at one and the same time, train all the teachers who use different types of texts.

It appears (see column C—Table 2, page 18) that the currently available training courses give rise to a new type of folk-lore—teaching of English, whatever the 'aims' of a course, is not possible without the use of audio-visual aids, or that since the learner is the more important factor involved in any ELT/L situation, the entire onus of making the activity successful is on him and not the teacher. The failure of such training courses is obvious: on the one hand they fail to influence the collective thinking of teachers with regard to teaching techniques, on the other hand they build a folk-lore which makes it convenient for the teacher to be indifferent to his duties. In this sense, these training courses do prove harmful (see column D—Table 2, page 18).

The point that emerges from the above discussion is that a teacher training programme which fails to

- equip the teacher for his survival-struggle and vocation,
- convert him to the pedagogic ideology it preaches,
- differentiate between the differing needs of the teachers working at differing levels,
- give specific training for specific purposes, and
- exploit those tendencies of the teachers, which if exploited could prove useful, and succeeds in building a folk-lore that blocks 'application' on the part of teachers and in disappointing those who undergo it may do more harm than good to an unwary trainee.

Obviously, we shall be looking for an alternative. What considerations should the alternative be based on?

Before you proceed further, attempt the following exercise.

**Check Your Progress 3**

Give at least 2 reasons to show that the 'generalistic type' teacher training programme is not satisfactory.

**Notes:** a) Space is given below for your answer.
b) Compare your answer with the one given at the end of this Unit (page 21).

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### 1.3.3 A relevant training programme—basic considerations

This being the state of affairs (refer to our discussion in 1.3.2) what we need is 'grass-roots training'. It consists in committing the prospective foreign language teacher to his profession from the very beginning of his university career, as doctors or engineers do, and in his following the courses that are both theoretical and practical throughout—'practice' being the focal point of the entire activity. Every element in such a grass-roots training contributes to the result i.e., competence in language teaching.

Although it is highly desirable to have adequately trained teachers, on practical grounds it may not be realistic to look up to such a concept of teacher-training. In the Indian conditions as they prevail today, the investment in terms of money and time, that a trainee will have to make in order to get such training will not have appropriate returns. But, a much stronger argument against this concept is the pressure of the geometric increase in our student numbers. Besides, considering the insignificant number of specialist institutions (ten in total) in the country, the prospect of 'grass-roots training' appears to be still more gloomy.

But, in spite of these handicaps, the obvious advantages and the evident utility of such training recommends it for the Indian situation, in which it will have to be based on a consideration of the following factors:

i) The country as a whole **should** be capable of training more than 27,000 teachers in a year.
ii) These 27,000 teachers are of vastly differing linguistic abilities (as far as their proficiency in English is concerned). They include teachers who hold secondary school certificates through B.A. degrees with and without specialisation in English (i.e. English as an elective subject at the B.A. level).
iii) These teachers can be withdrawn from their active duty for, at the most, 8-10 weeks in an academic year.
iv) Almost all these teachers have to depend on a blackboard, textbook, a notebook, pencils and pieces of chalk as the only teaching tools.
v) These teachers are overloaded with work and cannot genuinely be expected to spend their time for preparing their lessons.
vi) There are only ten specialist training institutes in the country. Most of them are not fully equipped.
vii) The trained teachers **should** be able to bring their students to the level of language proficiency which is expected of them (the learners) at the particular level of learning they work at, be it the school level, the higher secondary level or the degree level. The learner after having undergone a course in English should be able to use this language as a tool in such actual life situations as are commensurate with that course.

It may be noted that of the seven factors listed above only two, i.e.. the first and the seventh are speculative—see the implications of the word **should** in them—and the rest are facts that obtain in our present socio-political set up. Items (i), (iii), and (vi) point to 'distance education' as the only viable mode of training these teachers. Items (ii), (v) and (vii) point to another relevant consideration, namely that the training has not to be 'generalistic' in nature, it must cater to specific needs of a variety of teachers. Item (iv) points to the fact that there is no 'time'/scope for indulging in pedagogic luxuries which affluent countries can afford without any difficulties.

From our discussion we can deduce that the 'distance mode' of training may answer the problems of 'time' and 'numbers', but that does not bring us anywhere near the solution of the more basic problem of making training courses relevant to the needs of teachers and the society. To support this argument we discussed the notion of relevance in some detail and pointed to the considerations which are basic to a socially relevant training course. With these considerations in view, we argue that the

'distance' mode of training may serve our purpose. (Units 2, 3 and 4 of this Block discuss these points in greater details.)

## 1.4 LET US SUM UP

Consequent upon the enormous number of teachers to be properly trained, the inordinate period of time we may require to train all the teachers and the imperative need for a more relevant teacher-training programme, we suggested three alternative solutions. They are:

i) increasing the number of specialised institutes,
ii) effecting multiplier effect, and
iii) adopting distance education to train the teachers.

In the course of our discussion, we established that solutions (i) and (ii) above are ineffective and therefore cannot resolve our problem of 'numbers', 'time' and 'relevance'. We then affirmed that distance mode of training is the only means which might have the potentialities to satisfy our needs. By implication, we indicated that distance mode of teacher-training is more relevant than the type of training course prevalent today.

**Check Your Progress: Model Answers**

1 Multiplier effect is a mode of teacher-training programme in which a relatively smaller group of people are given training for about a year in how to train teachers. These resource persons are used at a later stage to train another set of teachers. This process is, thus, continued till all the teachers are given training. The number of people who receive training thus gets multiplied over and over again.

2 The ELTIs could not succeed in effecting 'multiplier effect' because of various reasons such as:
   i) Lack of academic infrastructure in these institutes;
   ii) the generalistic nature of training courses (which are supposed to suit all the teaching/learning situations and all the needs of the trainees); and
   iii) the failure of the people who receive training at these institutes to use their training purposefully. (The attitudes of their colleagues and students, the quality of the teaching materials and the examination pattern contribute to this fact.)

3 The generalistic type of teacher training programmes are unsatisfactory because they:
   i) fail to give differing teaching skills to teachers working at differing levels of instruction (i.e., for example, the needs of a school teacher will be obviously different from those of his counterpart at a college and further the types of teaching materials used at the school and the college levels are markedly different form each other); and
   ii) find it difficult to arrange for appropriate practice teaching sessions (i.e. the 'subjects' for these sessions are normally from urban areas and therefore do not constitute samples of the types the trainees may have to face in classroom situations.

# UNIT 2 ACADEMIC ISSUES

## Contents

2.0 Objectives
2.1 Introduction
2.2 Conventional Use of Distance Teaching
2.3 Cultural Bias of the 'Key Agencies'
2.4 Relative Effectiveness of the Two Modes of Education
  2.4.1 Controlling interfering variables
  2.4.2 Effectiveness of the distance mode vindicated
2.5 Let Us Sum Up

## 2.0 OBJECTIVES

In this Unit, we shall try to show you that:

- in general, academics in India do not think highly of distance education as a reformative educational strategy,
- such an attitude of the Indian academic is a consequence of his 'culturally induced bias', and has no empirical evidence to support it, and
- empirical evidence establishes the academic credibility of distance education as a successful educational strategy.

After you work through the Unit, we would like you to assess **your** attitude pertaining to the issue under consideration. This might be a difficult exercise to undergo, but we should make our views clear here—we believe that a distance educator's success depends significantly on his attitude towards this new mode of education. At this stage, you need to be certain about whether or not you strongly affirm that distance education can be and should be used as a reformative educational strategy to achieve the educational goals of our country.

You should be able to conduct a similar case study in your own field of specialisation.

## 2.1 INTRODUCTION

In Unit 1 of this Block we raised some important issues pertaining to the training of the teachers of English—the **time** needed to train all the teachers, the **money** needed to train them, the **large number** of teachers to be trained, and the **relevance** of the kind of training being given currently. We thought of three alternative solutions to these issues (see page 11) and then discussed two of them in great detail. In conclusion, we suggested that the solutions discussed did not appear to solve the problems, and therefore, the third alternative, i.e. the use of 'distance education' techniques (see page 20) was justifiable from the socio-political point of view which has been reflected upon in Units 1, 2 and 3 (Block 3, DE 1) from various angles.

Thus, having answered the first of the four questions raised on page 7 in the affirmative, we now turn to the second question, i.e., that of the academic credibility of distance education.

We propose to look into this issue with the help of another case study, and, once again, we turn to the teacher training course given by the CIEFL, Hyderabad.

## 2.2 CONVENTIONAL USE OF DISTANCE TEACHING

Of the ten ELTIs (see Unit 1, page 10) in the country only one, namely the CIEFL, Hyderabad, is using the techniques of distance education for purposes of training the teachers of English on a large scale, and the first group of teachers trained at the Institute through 'correspondence', passed out in 1974. One of the salutary effects of the initiative taken by the CIEFL is that distance education techniques are being

advocated, and courses (to be given by ELTIs other than the CIEFL, Hyderabad) are under preparation for teacher-trainees working at various levels of ELT. However, it should be mentioned here, the 'distance' teacher training courses given by the CIEFL Hyderabad, and those proposed to be given by various other ELTIs are conventional, and therefore 'imitative' and not 'innovative' in nature.

This objection notwithstanding, we admit that the distance mode of education appears to be the only solution to the problem of 'numbers'. (The issue of 'numbers' has been discussed in Unit 1). This is the 'mode' which also appears to have the potential to train more than 27,000 teachers (see Unit 1, page 12) in a year. However, we admit that to have identified the 'mode' which may serve our purpose is only half the answer. Unless it is used 'innovatively' this 'mode' may not show qualitatively better (or comparable) results than those of the existing face-to-face training programmes.

We substantiate our claim—that 'imitative' use of distance teaching may not show qualitatively better results—with the help of a Study.* The study was conducted with the objective of comparing the academic achievement of the on-campus graduate students with that of correspondence graduate students—the B.A. (Pass) students of Utkal University and the B.A. students of the Directorate of Correspondence Courses of the same university during the academic sessions 1976-77, 1977-78, and 1978-79. In total, the achievement score of 600 on-campus and 600 correspondence students were collected.

The analysis of the data showed that generally the on-campus students had achieved better than the correspondence students. The primary reason for such an outcome, as identified by the researchers, are as follows:

i) the course-component/syllabi of the correspondence courses are, by and large, similar to that of the regular courses;
ii) the academic input is mostly confined to print materials (which generally do not satisfy the requirements of distance teaching materials); and
iii) the Correspondence Directorate offers only a limited number of course combinations which are identical with those of the regular courses.

In essence, the 'imitative' use of distance teaching, thus, does not help bring in qualitatively better results.

(The study does not, however, overlook other variables that might have contributed to the failure of distance teaching that has eventually resulted in bringing down the academic achievement of students. The variables may be:

i) ineffective personal contact programmes
ii) inadequate library facility
iii) ineffective delivery system of teaching materials
iv) lack of effective feedback system.)

To use it 'innovatively' would, then, mean to exploit it to its full potential, (i.e., in the context of ELT) use it for presenting effectively a more relevant content, which is based on a more appropriate and convincing concept of teacher-training, as against its current use for purposes of transmitting a content similar to that of the residential courses, i.e. its 'imitative' use.

The claim is further evidenced by a comparison of the course-content prescribed for the CIEFL residential Diploma and that prescribed for the Diploma through correspondence. What emerges from this comparison is the fact that even this 'imitation' is not a complete one i.e. the range of subjects which is available in the residential course is considerably wider than what is available in the correspondence courses.

We should also substantiate our claim that distance education techniques are intended to be used imitatively in the future too (see the first paragraph of page 24).

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* The study "Achievement of Regular and Correspondence Students: A Comparative Study" was conducted in 1980 by Laxmi Shankar and Santosh K. Panda of the P.G. Department of Education, Kurukshetra University, Haryana. The academic achievement of graduate students of Utkal University, Orissa was compared with that of the graduate students enrolled in the Directorate of Correspondence Courses, Utkal University. The results pointed out the areas for the improvement of the correspondence courses.

Let us substantiate this claim with the following excerpt from the Proceedings of the XII Annual Conference of ELTIs in India (1977). The citation which pertains to teacher training at + 2 stage goes as follows:

"Coming to the mode of training, (it was) said that the correspondence mode of education integrated with face-to-face training was the only possible way of training thousands of untrained teachers... (Accordingly)... a correspondence training programme suitably modified, on the lines of the one being given by the CIEFL to college and university teachers (was suggested). Four subjects namely, (1) Spoken English and Phonetics, (2) Methods of Teaching English, (3) Modern English Grammar and Usage, and (4) Materials for the Teaching of English, could be presented to the trainees in 40 lessons spread over five months followed by a face-to-face training programme of three weeks... The specific role of the CIEFL would be to train key personnel, who, in turn, could work at various ELTIs and other centres to produce a multiplier effect. As such the crucial role of ELTIs was obvious from the training point of view too... Lastly, (it was suggested) that such a training programme could be implemented without involving huge sums of money. Besides, the Central agencies like the Ministry of Education and the NCERT and the State Governments would be willing to support this programme provided they were convinced of its usefulness."

Three points emerge from this citation. What are they?

i) It appears reasonable to suggest distance education techniques to train teachers at the +2 stage. However, a modified shorter course on the lines of the one given by the CIEFL to college and university teachers, appears to be of doubtful validity.

   Is the difference between the needs of the +2 level teachers and those of the college/university level teachers only a matter of 'more' or 'less' of a certain time honoured course-content?

   The obvious answer to this question is in the negative. It implies that the 'imitative' use of distance education techniques advocated in the above citation may not be the best answer.

ii) It is clear that the respective roles of the CIEFL and other ELTIs have been expressed explicitly. We have already discussed the weaknesses in the CIEFL's role of preparing 'resource persons'. Further, the assumption here is that the CIEFL has a ready machinery for training 'resource persons' who can train teachers **through correspondence.** This does not seem to be a tenable assumption against the background of our discussion pertaining to the training of 'resource persons' for face-to-face training situation, and the overall fate of the 'multiplier effect' produced in such situations (see Unit 1, page 12). Juxtaposing 'distance education' techniques on to a strategy that has not worked well so far, may not be advisable, but the 'imitative' use of these techniques cannot go beyond that juxtaposition.

iii) It is said that the correspondence mode of instruction does not involve huge sums of money, and both the Central and the State agencies would support this programme, once they are convinced of its usefulness. By implication, the Central as well as the State agencies are yet to be convinced of its usefulness. How and when is this 'usefulness' going to be proved!

Most of the key people in the specialised institutions like the CIEFL are no doubt products of the face-to-face mode of education and, therefore, most of them will find it difficult to appreciate the overall potential of the correspondence mode of instruction. The best they can do under the pressure of circumstances is to use the distance mode 'imitatively', for it is only when one is convinced of the usefulness of a certain mode of activity, that it might be put to 'innovative' uses.

**Check Your Progress 1**

Define innovative use of distance mode of training in not more than 10 lines.

**Notes:** a) Space is given below for your answer.
b) Compare your answer with the one given at the end of this Unit (p. 34).

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The three points that we discussed on page 25 not only substantiate the claim that the 'distance education' techniques are being used 'imitatively' and are intended to be used in the same way in future too, but also point to three distinct causes thereof. The first cause is rooted in the content of the course, the second in the strategy i.e. the way of implementing the course, and the third in the 'cultural bias' of the key personnel and the key institutions.

The first two of these causes are related to the problem of the 'relevance' of the present teacher-training course. We have already discussed this problem in Unit 1 (see pages 16-21). Here we shall discuss the third of these causes.

## 2.3 CULTURAL BIAS OF THE 'KEY AGENCIES'

Consequent upon their "unconscious culturally induced biases", the academics in general do not think highly of distance education as a reformative educational strategy. It will take some time for this situation to change appreciably.

To support this observation, we shall present here a study which was carried out over a considerable period of time (1976-1979). In the study, the opinions of the faculty members—particularly the ELT experts of the CIEFL—about the correspondence courses given by the Institute were collected and analysed.

For this purpose the faculty members were approached one by one, on one or another pretext and engaged in an informal talk with special reference to the following questions:

i) **Overall relative usefulness:** Which is more useful, the course given through correspondence or the one given to regular participants?

ii) **Partial relative usefulness:** Is it that correspondence courses might be more useful in certain subjects and the regular residential courses more useful in certain other subjects?

iii) **Possibility of equation:** Is it possible at all (whatever the means) to make correspondence courses as useful as the regular residential courses?

iv) **Mere utility:** Can correspondence courses (modified adequately) serve the purpose effectively?

The meetings were repeated twice with the same group (with some variations) at regular intervals of about 15/16 months with the same aim as mentioned above. This was followed by a round of meetings with the newly appointed staff.

We have pictured the overall opinions of the staff members in the following table.

The table shows that the collective opinion of the teaching faculty is fairly consistent—correspondence courses are no match to the regular residential courses. And the opinion of the junior staff is in full agreement with that of senior members. This shows how strong the 'cultural trap' may be. A body of academics that has been brought up on a certain mode of education can hardly think that a different mode can

| Questions ↓ | RESPONSES | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| | I meeting Jan-Feb. 1976 | II meeting June-July 1977 | III meeting Nov.-Dec. 1978 | IV meeting April-June 1979 |
| No. of subjects → | 28 | 25 | 26 | 9 |
| Q.I.–Which is more useful – RC's or CC's? | RC's-28<br>CC's-× | RC's-25<br>CC's-× | RC's-26<br>CC's-× | RC's-9<br>CC's-× |
| Q.II–Which mode is better for which subjects? | RC's for all subjects – 28<br>CC's for nil – 28 | RC's for all subjects-25<br>CC's for nil – 25 | RC's for all subjects-26<br>CC's for nil – 26 | RC's for all subjects – 9<br>CC's for nil – 9 |
| Q.III – Can CC's be made as effective as RC's? | Yes – ×<br>No – 28<br>TSE – × | Yes – ×<br>No – 25<br>TSE – × | Yes – ×<br>No – 24(1)<br>(23)<br>TSE – 2<br>(2) | Yes – ×<br>No – 8<br>TSE – 1 |
| Q.IV – Can CC's be effective if modified? | Yes – ×<br>No – 23<br>TSE – 5 | Yes – ×<br>(20) No – 20<br>(1) TSE – 5<br>(4) | Yes – ×<br>No – 21 (1)<br>(20)<br>TSE – 5<br>(5) (2) | Yes – ×<br>No – 8<br>TSE–1 |

**Notes:** 1 RC's: Residential Courses, CC's: Correspondence Courses, TSE: To Some Extent.

2 Numbers following the arrows show the distribution as it shaped in the following meeting.

**Table 3: Responses of the staff members—a sum up**

be as useful as or at times more effective than the one they are familiar with. It is evident that the culturally induced bias in favour of face-to-face instruction makes it difficult for people to see the advantages which the correspondence mode of instruction can offer.

An academic body that does not appear to have any faith in the correspondence mode of instruction, can hardly put it to 'innovative use' and lead other institutions in a similar task. This lead if given and accepted will be a mere extension of the 'imitative' or conventional use of correspondence courses. The obvious explanation, it appears, is that the biases in favour of the conventions make it difficult for them to appreciate the full potential of the distance education techniques; consequently they use these techniques 'imitatively'.

What has been understood about the correspondence mode of instruction is that it is economical, and that its reach is extensive both in terms of 'numbers' and 'distance', but as far as its social and educational utility is concerned, nothing beyond its 'imitative' use has been realised yet. To make this point clear, we shall refer to the way the Open University, UK, uses this mode. In the words of Bates (1974) the Open University has introduced some major innovations to make their courses academically effective and socially relevant.

**What are these major innovations?**

We shall mention a few like open entry, course team, a degree by cumulative credits; low-cost per student, interdisciplinary courses, a systems and educational technology approach to learning and course design, joint production of courses, post-experience

courses, etc. A cursory look at this list of educational innovations points to the strengths of this unorthodox approach to education.

Going back to the question (see page 7) which we attempted to answer at some length, we would like to assert that although distance education as a reformative educational strategy has yet to reach the desired level, there is no reason to question its academic credibility. Once we, as academics, get over our culturally induced biases, we shall rate it very high on the scale of such credibility, both at the theoretical and practical levels.

Moreover, there is no justification for getting biased in favour of one or the other mode of instruction, unless the results of the two have been compared. The CIEFL has not evolved any mechanism to assess the post-training performance of its trainees. And therefore, for the purpose of developing a reliable and valid viewpoint about the relative effectiveness of the modes of instruction, we shall use the respective scores at the end of the term examinations as the criterion for comparing the effectiveness of the two modes.

In section 2.4 we have attempted to show how the comparison was carried out.

## 2.4 RELATIVE EFFECTIVENESS OF THE TWO MODES OF EDUCATION

The two modes under consideration are:

i) face-to-face education—the mode currently favoured by most academics, and
ii) correspondence education—the mode that seeks social and academic recognition.

Before we proceed any further, we would like to say that the intake of the Department of Correspondence Courses (the CIEFL) for a year is more than ten times that of the institute for regular residential courses. This, however, does not suggest that the institute's correspondence courses are more popular or effective than its face-to-face training programme, nor that the Certificate course or/and the Diploma course given through correspondence is/are pedagogically more useful than the regular residential Certificate or/and Diploma Course(s). The larger number of correspondence students is attributed to the fact that many in-service teachers of English who for one or the other reason cannot join the residential courses have to accept the 'second choice'—the correspondence courses. And those who can afford to undergo the formalities of a regular course would go for the 'first choice'—the regular courses.

The implication of such a view is that correspondence studies are taken up not for their intrinsic pedagogic value, but to counter certain social hurdles which deprive in-service teachers of joining the regular courses. It is not uncustomary to think that the better mode of imparting education is a face-to-face teaching programme. Personal contact with teachers, availability of books, journals, tutorials, undisturbed studies in intense academic atmosphere and the possibility of getting immediate solutions to academic problems are some of the factors that contribute to strengthen this notion. Further, academics in general and correspondence students in particular look upon the regular students as superior beings.

This lack of status for correspondence education, perhaps, stems from the following factors—lack of library facilities, long gaps of time between the questions raised and the answers received, no immediate personal contact with teachers, heavy social commitments, disturbed study hours and no interaction within a cross-section of student population. Notwithstanding the obvious odds against the correspondence mode of education, it must have an appreciable degree of pedagogic reliability, for otherwise it would not have withstood the test of time in the West or in the USSR.

Having said this, we shall now look into the relative effectiveness of the two modes of education under discussion.

As mentioned earlier (see page 28) we used the overall performance of the trainees for purposes of comparison. The data collected from the examination records of the two samples—correspondence participants and the regular participants of a particular

year, 1975 in this case—were compared to assess the relative effectiveness of the two modes.

Now before we look into the data, try the following exercise.

**Check Your Progress 2**

List any four factors (which are generally pointed to) that put the distance mode of education at a lower rung in terms of academic prestige.

**Notes:** a) Space is given below for your answer.
b) Compare your answer with the one given at the end of this Unit (p. 34).

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## 2.4.1 Controlling interfering variables

The overall performance of the trainees (correspondence and regular) collected from the examination records is presented in the following table (page 30).

Before we decide and interpret the data (see table 4) we shall attempt to explain how various interfering variables were controlled.

i) Look at the table. The two samples of 18 students each appeared at different examinations comprising questions of differing difficulty levels and types—though based on almost identical syllabi—may be the greatest hurdle in the way of a genuine comparison. The apprehension is that a comparison of performance at two different examinations is bound to bring in errors in the final interpretation. To overcome this difficulty, question papers of three successive years, i.e. 1973 (regular courses only), 1974 (two sets of question papers in the case of correspondence trainees) and 1975 of the training programmes under consideration were analysed to discover the broad differences and similarities in question types, and their difficulty levels too. On the basis of this analysis only five pairs of questions from three different subjects (in table 4, we have denoted these subjects by letters X, Y and Z) were chosen for the study. Each pair comprised two similar questions—similar in the sense of the question type and the difficulty level of questions—one each from the respective courses. A brief description of the questions is given below:

**Subject X:** I pair—similar essay type questions
II pair—similar problems based on the same theory

**Subject Y:** I pair—similar analytical questions
II pair—similar problems based on the same theory

**Subject Z:** A pair of similar practical questions based on the same theory.

The interfering variables inherent in the comparison of performances at two different examinations were, thus, taken care of considerably, as the performance of the two samples based on their answers to questions of the same type and comparable difficulty level only were taken into consideration.

ii) Another source of error, when two separate groups are being compared, is the inequality in their basic abilities. To minimise this error and make the groups 'matched' to the greatest extent possible, only such students as had scored an overall B grade in the final computation were considered in this study.

We should mention here that the patterns of the results of both the modes show distributions which can be represented by a normal curve.

| S.No. | Correspondence Courses=CC's | Residential Courses = RC's | SUBJECT–X | | | | | SUBJECT–Y | | | | | | SUBJECT–Z | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | | | I Pair | | II Pair(Qs) | | | I Pair | | | II Pair(Qs) | | | The only Pair(Qs) | |
| | | | CC's $E_1$ | RC's $E_1$ | CC's $E_1$ | RC's $E_2$ | RC's $E_1$ | CC's $E_3$ | RC's $E_4$ | RC's $E_3$ | CC's $E_3$ | RC's $E_4$ | RC's $E_3$ | CC's $E_5$ | RC's $E_5$ |
| 1 | 532 | 107 | 10.0 | 10.0 | 6.9 | 8.0 | 9.2 | 5.3 | 7.0 | 5.5 | 5.5 | 9.0 | 8.0 | 6.7 | 5.0 |
| 2 | 541 | 108 | 10.0 | 5.0 | 7.5 | 6.5 | 1.5 | 4.0 | 6.0 | 4.5 | 7.0 | 8.0 | 7.0 | 8.0 | 5.0 |
| 3 | 545 | 112 | 10.0 | 00.0 | 5.0 | 6.0 | 2.5 | 5.3 | 6.0 | 6.0 | 5.5 | 10.00 | 10.0 | 5.8 | 3.3 |
| 4 | 548 | 113 | 10.0 | 9.0 | 5.6 | 7.5 | 2.5 | 7.3 | 6.5 | 3.0 | 7.0 | 8.0 | 8.0 | 7.7 | 6.7 |
| 5 | 551 | 116 | 5.0 | 9.0 | 2.5 | 7.5 | 8.0 | 5.3 | 8.5 | 6.5 | 5.5 | 10.0 | 10.0 | 6.7 | 5.8 |
| 6 | 554 | 117 | 6.3 | 10.0 | 6.9 | 7.0 | 7.5 | 6.3 | 6.5 | 5.0 | 6.5 | 6.0 | 5.0 | 4.3 | 5.0 |
| 7 | 564 | 120 | 10.0 | 2.0 | 6.2 | 7.0 | 5.0 | 2.7 | 7.5 | 5.0 | 6.0 | 10.0 | 10.0 | 5.5 | 5.6 |
| 8 | 566 | 121 | 10.0 | 10.0 | 7.5 | 6.5 | 1.5 | 4.0 | 7.5 | 4.5 | 6.0 | 6.0 | 6.0 | 7.5 | 5.0 |
| 9 | 578 | 123 | 10.0 | 10.0 | 8.1 | 5.0 | 1.5 | 4.7 | 9.5 | 6.5 | 4.5 | 9.0 | 9.0 | 7.0 | 0.0 |
| 10 | 581 | 124 | 10.0 | 2.5 | 7.5 | 8.5 | 2.5 | 4.0 | 8.0 | 5.0 | 5.5 | 9.0 | 7.0 | 6.3 | 5.0 |
| 11 | 588 | 125 | 10.0 | 2.5 | 6.3 | 7.0 | 7.5 | 2.3 | 9.0 | 6.0 | 7.0 | 9.0 | 7.0 | 6.2 | 4.2 |
| 12 | 592 | 127 | 10.0 | 00.0 | 6.3 | 7.0 | 6.0 | 1.3 | 2.5 | 2.0 | 7.0 | 10.0 | 10.0 | 6.3 | 5.8 |
| 13 | 611 | 133 | 10.0 | 2.5 | 5.6 | 7.0 | 2.5 | 6.7 | 8.0 | 5.0 | 7.0 | 10.0 | 9.0 | 6.5 | 6.7 |
| 14 | 615 | 134 | 10.0 | 9.5 | 5.6 | 8.0 | 9.0 | 6.7 | 8.0 | 6.5 | 5.0 | 10.0 | 10.0 | 5.3 | 7.5 |
| 15 | 620 | 136 | 00.0 | 5.0 | 8.1 | 7.5 | 7.0 | 4.0 | 9.0 | 6.0 | 5.5 | 10.0 | 10.0 | 6.5 | 5.0 |
| 16 | 622 | 137 | 10.0 | 2.5 | 5.6 | 7.0 | 6.0 | 4.7 | 3.0 | 4.0 | 7.0 | 3.0 | 2.0 | 7.0 | 4.2 |
| 17 | 630 | 138 | 10.0 | 5.0 | 6.3 | 8.0 | 3.5 | 4.7 | 3.0 | 3.0 | 6.5 | 7.0 | 8.0 | 6.0 | 5.8 |
| 18 | 643 | 139 | 5.0 | 00.0 | 5.9 | 7.5 | 8.5 | 1.3 | 3.5 | 4.0 | 7.5 | 9.0 | 9.0 | 6.3 | 3.3 |
| Total → Average Score per question | | | 156.3 / 8.7 | 94.5 / 5.3 | 113.4 / 6.3 | 128.5 / 7.1 | 91.5 / 5.1 | 80.7 / 4.5 | 119.0 / 6.6 | 88.0 / 4.9 | 111.5 / 6.2 | 153.0 / 8.5 | 145.0 / 8.0 | 115.7 / 6.4 | 88.3 / 4.9 |

Overall averages: The same examiner → CC's: 6.42/Qs; RC's: 5.64/Qs.
The different examiners → CC's: 6.42/Qs; RC's: 6.48/Qs.

$E_1$, $E_2$, $E_3$ ... Stand for examiner$_1$, examiner$_2$ etc.

| Frequency: Score / no. of students | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | $0.0/_1$ $0.0/_3$ | $2.5/_1$ $5.0/_1$ $1.5/_3$ | $1.3/_2$ $2.5/_1$ $2.0/_1$ | $4.5/_1$ $3.0/_1$ $2.0/_1$ | $4.5/_1$ $0.0/_1$ |
| | $5.0/_2$ $2.0/_1$ | $5.0/_1$ $6.0/_1$ $2.5/_4$ | $2.5/_2$ $3.0/_2$ $3.0/_2$ | $5.0/_1$ $6.0/_2$ $5.0/_1$ | $5.5/_2$ $3.5/_2$ |
| | $6.5/_1$ $2.5/_4$ | $5.5/_4$ $6.5/_2$ $3.5/_1$ | $4.0/_4$ $3.5/_1$ $4.0/_2$ | $5.5/_2$ $7.0/_1$ $6.0/_1$ | $6.0/_3$ $4.0/_2$ |
| | $10.0/_4$ $5.0/_3$ | $6.0/_1$ $7.0/_6$ $5.0/_1$ | $4.5/_3$ $6.0/_2$ $4.5/_2$ | $6.0/_2$ $8.0/_2$ $7.0/_3$ | $6.5/_7$ $5.0/_7$ |
| | $9.0/_2$ | $6.5/_4$ $7.5/_4$ $6.0/_2$ | $5.5/_3$ $6.5/_2$ $5.0/_4$ | $6.5/_2$ $9.0/_5$ $8.0/_3$ | $7.0/_2$ $6.0/_3$ |
| | $9.6/_1$ | $7.0/_2$ $8.0/_3$ $7.0/_1$ | $6.5/_3$ $7.0/_1$ $5.5/_1$ | $7.0/_6$ $10.0/_7$ $9.0/_3$ | $7.5/_2$ $6.5/_2$ |
| | $10.0/_4$ | $7.5/_3$ $8.5/_1$ $7.5/_2$ | $7.5/_1$ $7.5/_2$ $6.0/_3$ | $7.5/_1$ $10.0/_6$ | $8.0/_1$ $7.5/_1$ |
| | | $8.0/_2$ $8.0/_1$ | $8.0/_3$ $6.5/_3$ | | |
| | | $8.5/_1$ | $8.5/_1$ | | |
| | | $9.0/_2$ | $9.0/_2$ | | |
| | | | $8.5/_1$ | | |

MARKS SCORED OUT OF A MAXIMUM OF 10 MARKS

Table 4: Comparison of performances at examination: Training through correspondence & residential courses

A detailed description is given in the following table.

| Mode of Education | Top Grade A | Middle Grades B & C | Low Grade D |
|---|---|---|---|
| Face-to-face mode | 4% | 43% + 42% = 85% | 11% |
| Correspondence mode | 2% | 36% + 46% = 82% | 16% |

**Table 5: Distribution of successful candidates**

iii) Of the five pairs, questions in three pairs, i.e. II pair in subject X, I and II pairs in Subject Y were not evaluated by the same examiners. As such subjectivity in evaluation, consequent upon the examiner variable was to be eliminated, and it was arranged to get the answer-scripts of the regular students evaluated by the examiners who had checked those of the correspondence participants earlier. This 'unofficial' evaluation was conducted with a view to eliminating the examiner variable.

The fact that the attitudes of examiners toward the two samples of participants might affect the evaluation trends was given due consideration. However, no counter steps were taken to undo the effects of this variable.

## 2.4.2 Effectiveness of the distance mode vindicated

Let us now interpret the data presented in Table 4. It shows in figures the scores of each student in each question, computed at a uniform maximum possible score of 10 marks per question; the average score in each question out of a maximum of 10 marks, and the score-student frequency distribution of the three subjects, two viz. X and Z indicate that correspondence participants perform better than the regular participants, while Y shows better performance by the regular students (see Table 4).

We shall elaborate on this.

An analysis of the answers with regard to the first pair of questions (Subject X), indicates that a correspondence participant does better in problem-solving. It is, perhaps, because his lessons force him to pay exclusive attention to a limited number of topics which deal with such problems. Such topics may be overlooked by the regular students who have a whole library to tempt them into reading—relevant, irrelevant and even trivial. A correspondence student on the other hand, concentrates completely on his comparatively smaller bits of information.

In this particular case both the correspondence and the regular students had received comparable instruction in terms of such variables as 'the teacher' and the 'teaching materials'. Obviously, therefore, correspondence mode of education is better than face-to-face education, or a second possible interpretation is that an effective correspondence tutor may not necessarily be equally effective in a classroom situation (because the bit of the course we are concerned with here was taught by one and the same teacher to both the groups).

The two pairs of questions (Subject Y), however, contradict these conclusions. This contradiction is reinforced by the fact that the Subjects X and Y cover like areas of study and a student who finds X interesting, usually finds comparable interest in Y too. Why then do the data show contradictory results? The only factors that seem to explain the contradiction are:

i) the examiner attitudes, and
ii) the quality of tuition.

**Examiner attitudes**

If examiner no. 3 (see table 4) is favourably inclined to regular learners, examiner no. 1 has his sympathies with the correspondence students. This certainly could be a valid interpretation, but it has no intrinsic significance to substantiate the notion of the 'second-ratedness' of the correspondence mode of education. The fact, though unjustifiable, that examiner's sympathies are as divided as those of the learners and the society warrants an analysis of teacher attitudes and we must find ways to modify them in case they are found to be harmful.

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**Quality of tuition**

As in case of a face-to-face teaching situation, two classes following the same course and using the same teaching materials may show appreciable differences in average student-performance because of the varying quality of tuition given to them, so might it happen in correspondence education on the one hand and in a cross comparison of correspondence and face-to-face education on the other. In our study probably the correspondence students did not get good tuition in Subject Y. And on similar grounds, perhaps the teacher of subject X (especially in the case of the area covered by the first pair of questions) did not do his best with the regular students. The conclusion is that not the mode of education but the teacher/tutor effort might be a vital factor in educating people; and if it is to be controlled to yield maximum benefits, correspondence education should have an edge over face-to-face education, because it is easier to control and utilise teacher-efforts in the former system.

**The frequency distribution (score/student-numbers) in the case of the I pair (Subject X) is as follows:**

**Regular students:** About 39% of the students group into grade A; 44% into Grade D; and only 17% into grades B and C put together.

**Correspondence students:** About 78% of the students group into grade A; just 5% into group D; and 17% into grades B and C put together.

The frequency distribution in either case does not conform to a 'normal curve'. The question seems to be of the type which allows only those who know the answer and eliminates the 'attempters'. If this observation is valid the correspondence students fare better, perhaps, because they are able to concentrate on specific areas of the course more effectively than the regular students. This confirms our interpretation of the data regarding Subject X, I pair (see Table 4).

The II pair (Subject X) being essay type questions, demands extensive reading, appropriate organisation of the material in the answer and an approximation to the examiner's ideal answer to the question.

How significant the last of these demands could be is very clearly indicated by the marks awarded by the two examiners: (see Table 4—Subject X, pair II, $E_1$ and $E_2$).

Out of a maximum of 10 marks, the awards for the same answer can be as varying as 1.5:6.5, 2.5:7.0, 5.1:7.0, 3.5:8.0 and the like. A cursory look at such data might mislead one to conclude that any study like the present one is an uncalled for exercise in futility. But the other side of the picture reveals a number of crucially valid facts which deserve consideration at all academic levels.

What are these valid facts? For examples:

i) The notion that correspondence education is necessarily a second rate one as compared with face-to-face education may not be a pedagogic absolute, because the essay type questions under consideration, as usual, are not reliable and therefore certainly not valid. And if they are so for regular students, they cannot be different for correspondence students. As such, if the very tools of comparative assessment are not reliable, we have no right to brand correspondence education with any kind of stigma.

ii) The notion that regular students who have library facilities read extensively and, therefore, are better equipped than their counterparts taking correspondence courses may be yet another fallacy. If library facilities and extensive studies were all that significant for the type of examinations we have, the average score of correspondence students should have been considerably lower than that of the regular students with both the official and unofficial examiners, which it is not. This finding (see table 4) shows that the utility of libraries for examination oriented courses is not as high as we think it to be. This, however, does not reduce the importance of libraries, but the implication that a correspondence student may not suffer, as much as he is supposed to, on account of his limited reading or questionable accessibility to libraries, cannot be ignored. Besides, a correspondence student has many more chances of inculcating the habit of organised expression than the regular student, as the former keeps on bettering his style and expression as he writes regularly to prepare his answer-scripts and reads course-units which are much better organised than a lecture or tutorial can be.

**The frequency distribution (score and student numbers) in the case of the II pair, (subject X) is as follows:**

**Regular students:** Over 45% of the students group into grade A, none into grade D, and 55% into grades B and C put together.

**Correspondence students:** About 28% of the students group into grade A, 6% into grade D and 66% into grades B and C put together.

The distribution in the case of correspondence students does conform, though not ideally, to a 'normal curve', but that of the regular students does not, and the latter changes its complexion considerably with a different examiner, who pushes 45% into grade D, and retains only 33% in grade A, leaving a small group of 22% into grades B and C put together. This distribution too does not conform to a 'normal curve', and our conclusions pertaining to essay type questions and the utility of libraries stand confirmed.

**The frequency distribution in the case of Subject Y** (both the pairs of questions) also confirms our interpretation of the data, as the frequency pattern in case of both these pairs of questions does not conform to a 'normal curve'. Consider the following table:

| Grades scored | I pair of questions | | | | II pair of questions | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | Different Examiners | | The same Examiner | | Different Examiners | | The same Examiner | |
| | RC | CC | RC | CC | RC | CC | RC | CC |
| Grade A | 50% | 5% | 0% | 5% | 78% | 5% | 67% | 5% |
| Grades B & C put together | 28% | 34% | 72% | 34% | 17% | 95% | 28% | 95% |
| Grade D | 22% | 61% | 28% | 61% | 5% | 0% | 5% | 0% |

RC—Regular Courses

CC—Correspondence Courses

**Table 6: Frequency Distribution—Subject Y**

**The frequency distribution in the case of subject Z** (the last pair of questions) presents a typical contrast to the four pairs discussed so far. It is the only case in which the frequency distribution conforms, though not completely, to a 'normal curve'.

**Regular students:** 5% of the students group into Grade A, 28% into grade D, and 67% into grades B and C put together.

**Correspondence students:** 17% of the students group into grade A, none into grade D, and 83% into grades B and C put together.

Frequency patterns of the last pair of questions (subject Z) are very much in favour of correspondence mode. It might be so, to repeat earlier arguments, because of one or all of the following factors:

i) better correspondence tuition,
ii) favourable examiner attitudes, or
iii) learners' regular exercise in written English.

**What have we said in section 2.4?**

i) As far as content courses are concerned face-to-face education does not show any significantly intrinsic advantage over correspondence education. Therefore, the notion that the latter is a second-rate mode of education may be false. The CIEFL correspondence courses, by and large, may be said to be as good or as bad as the CIEFL courses given to regular resident students.
ii) The performance of the students (at examinations) may not depend as much on the mode of instruction as on the nature of the tuition available under the modes.
iii) A good classroom teacher is not necessarily a good correspondence teacher and vice versa.

iv) Libraries do not seem to contribute significantly to the performance of learners whose sole purpose is to get through an examination.

v) Most of the tests given at the CIEFL may not be reliable, nor valid either; and their results, in most cases, may not conform to a 'normal curve'.

One general conclusion is that the success or failure of a mode of instruction seems to depend on the men and the materials behind it. The quality and performance of both the men and the materials, we assume, can be controlled to improve the effectiveness of either mode. Besides, items (i) to (v) affirm that the distance mode of teacher training is academically viable and the academic credibility of such a mode is not in question.

A word of caution:

Having concluded, thus, we should also say that on account of the nature of the 'population samples', the interfering variables and also the statistics, (which has not been taken beyond the stage of simple averages), the conclusions derived from this study cannot be considered to be conclusive nor statistically significant. We accept the criticism on the grounds that the statistics presented here is not sophisticated, but the limited objective (suggested in the general conclusion drawn above) of establishing a probability has been achieved fairly convincingly.

To close we quote Rumble (1986) who says that "many such comparative studies have been carried out. The general conclusions from them are that it is factors such as the pedagogical quality and clarity of presentation, the relevance of the content, and the motivation and interest of the learners, which are the significant variables, rather than the particular medium of instruction".

## 2.5 LET US SUM UP

In this Unit we established:

i) the fact that the distance teacher-training programmes currently available at the specialist institutes are 'imitative' in nature; and that we need to use distance mode of education innovatively;

ii) that the academics look at the distance mode of teaching/learning with disdain because of culturally induced biases;

iii) a case for the academic credibility of distance education; and

iv) that compelling social needs are not the only props which sustain the growth of distance education, for if it were so the societies that have accepted this mode of education as a perfect alternative to face-to-face education would have experienced irrevocable educational disasters. Distance education has pedagogic validity too.

**Check Your Progress: Model Answers**

1 The content used in the 'distance' teacher-training courses currently available at the specialist institute is similar to that of the residential courses. In other words, except the mode of transmission of instruction, these teacher-training courses more often than not, are mere replicas of the conventional courses. To use distance education innovatively would then mean to present more relevant content materials (print and electronic media) to have effective academic communication and student support services.

2 i) lack of library facilities
ii) absence of intense academic atmosphere
iii) lack of immediate feedback
iv) absence of poor group interaction.

# UNIT 3 SOCIO-ACADEMIC CREDIBILITY

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## 3.0 OBJECTIVES

Our endeavour in this Unit is to ascertain the socio-academic credibility of the distance mode of teaching/learning and establish distance education as an academic discipline.

As careful reading of this Unit will enable you:

- to list the essential 'functions' of an educational system,
- to discuss the socio-academic relevance of distance education, and
- to argue for distance education as a discipline (i.e., you will have, towards the end of this Unit, developed useful insights into and examined critically whether or not distance education fulfils the objectives that define the functioning of an educational system).

## 3.1 INTRODUCTION

In Unit 1, Block 2, DE 1, we mentioned that distance education is an innovative system of educational endeavour which has been in existence for about 150 years. It has, of late, emerged as a standard component of the educational system in many countries (See Units 2 & 3, Block 1, DE 1). We said (Units 2 & 3, Block 2, DE 1) that the innovative character of the distance mode of teaching/learning emanates primarily from the following:

- the underlying idea that learning can occur without physical contiguity of the teacher and student,
- the consistent use of non-contiguous media both for presenting learning materials and for the ensuing academic communication,
- the methods used to exploit the non-contiguous teaching/learning situation so as to accomplish effective didactic conversation,
- the possibility of providing independent individual learning as well as mass education through personal tutoring and industrialised working methods, and
- the influence distance education exerts on updating knowledge, continuing and adult education by opening new vistas of study opportunities.

We also emphasised the fact that distance education provides a complete educational coverage equal in standards and status to that of conventional education. It, obviously, supposes that distance education encompasses every stage of the educational process—from application for enrolment to certification.

Having done this, we now attempt to establish distance education as a discipline. We have identified the objectives that contribute to the credibility of an educational system. We have also tried to show how each one of the objectives of an educational

area has been adequately fulfilled by distance education. Seen from the perspective, presented in this Unit, it should not be difficult for you to argue for distance education as an academic discipline.

## 3.2 FUNCTIONS OF AN EDUCATIONAL SYSTEM

The relevance of any educational system ought to be adjudged in terms of the objectives that give the system a significant social function. Thus, it is not presumptuous to say that the basic issue of credibility can be seen as one of either success or failure to accomplish those objectives. To serve our immediate purpose, we have listed the following four objectives that define the functioning of an educational system.

i) To give instruction in skills,
ii) To build a cultivated society,
iii) To advance learning, and
iv) To transmit the secular view of man.

**What do we mean by each one of these objectives?**
We shall talk about each of these objectives briefly in the same order as given above.

i) The primary function of an educational system is to give instruction in skills that are related to and promote a general division of labour and at the same time respond to changes in such division of labour. (It should be mentioned here that the fact that a student is in an institution of higher learning mainly because his work and training are related to his future prospects.)
ii) Besides imparting skills that are purely practical, education aims at teaching whatever it does in a manner calculated to develop the powers of the mind. It, thus, attempts to produce a cultivated society, it is this extraordinary function of the educational system that places it in a highly eminent light.
iii) An educational system, furthermore, makes a contribution to the growth of knowledge and which, in turn, leads to advancement of truth or the unveiling of ignorance. This growth of knowledge becomes a specialised function of the educational system especially at the higher level. This explains the reason why research is generally coupled with teaching at the higher levels of learning.
iv) The education system is unique in so far as it is the only system that seeks to transmit a common human culture and common standards of citizenship. It indicates the spread or rationality or a certain view of man and so a vision of the human potential that distinguishes the educational system. To emphasise, educational institutions, thus, play a crucial role in the evolution of human culture.

These being the objectives which determine the socio-academic credibility of an educational system, we raise a question—does distance education fulfll these objectives?

In order to take stock of the capabilities of distance education, it is necessary to evolve a valid perspective from which its legitimacy will be considered.

## 3.3 DISTANCE EDUCATION SYSTEMS: A SOCIO-ACADEMIC PERSPECTIVE

The idealism of the conventional university is well-known, yet some of its special features, perhaps, need to be discussed in some detail.

The universities of the conventional type function almost like ivory towers showing little care for the needs of the students.

The charges commonly levelled against the conventional educational system, to name a few, are

i) educational programmes/courses offered are not relevant to the existing social needs,

ii) the highest paid teachers are reaching fewer and fewer selected students,
iii) the age-old classroom teaching method is becoming more and more stale and ineffective,
iv) the rigidity regarding course-duration, classroom attendance, etc. remains unchallenged, and
v) benefits of higher and better education continue to be enjoyed by a privileged few.

### 3.3.1 Socio-academic "Needs" and conventional educational assumptions: a mismatch

The above mentioned items (i-v) indicate a mismatch between the present socio-academic needs and the conventional educational system. We should mention here that much of this insular nature of conventional educational system—particularly of higher education—has arisen from the fact that research and teaching have been regarded as twin functions that must be yoked together. A university teacher normally earns his right to teach on account of the research he or she was and/or has been engaged in. The result has been the development of courses that are more geared to the needs of research scholars than to those of the society, for example. Gradually, university education has been deprived of its 'application' value and has grown to be an autonomous and often a non-relevant organisation; this is true at least of the Indian situation.

As a reaction to the above view, there came into being polytechnics and various institutions of management and technology. These institutions prepare students for degrees just as the universities do. At the same time, they cater for other levels of training through various diplomas that are more tuned to the needs of the society. Unlike the conventional universities, these institutions are not intended to be entirely research-oriented and they are more concerned with being genuinely useful to the needs of the society.

New demands, thus, are being made on the educational system and these arise from the nature of the industrial society. There is, therefore, a tacit struggle between the traditional university framework with its emphasis on scholarship, concern with preserving human culture, advancing knowledge and the new demand for vocation-oriented courses which will help provide training for the general growth of the society. In an age of the professional, there is a growing demand for relevant knowledge and skills and for a continual updating of such information/skills. There is also a demand for post-experience education to which an adult can keep returning to draw fresh sustenance.

One way of meeting these new demands is to separate long-term education from short-term courses which are mainly of the post-experience type. A logical way of looking at this would be to assume a first stage of education which is formal and of long duration and which covers basic 'fundamentals' in various disciplines. This is followed by experience which creates definite needs. A variety of needs exist at different levels.

These may be listed as follows:

i) need for part-time education with a more flexible arrangement in order to meet the requirements of young persons who learn and earn simultaneously,
ii) need for specialised courses for those who are in-service,
iii) need for intellectual stimulation on the part of the adult, and
iv) need for certification without undergoing the formalities of conventional university system.

The above items also assume that along with the growth of the industrial society there has emerged a different kind of motivation towards education. That is, the traditional idea of a son generally following the footsteps of his father has become obsolete. Young men and women generally have definite ideas about what they wish to do or do not wish to do. Often they wish to change goals or subjects midstream, depending upon their perception of changing needs. This assumes both a strong motivation and a flexibility of approach. Hence a system of education that can cater to such high motivation and offer a package that is flexible enough seems to be the greatest need of the industrial society. (Recall Unit 1, Block 1, DE 1, where we said that the changes in educational system can be attributed to the societal changes.)

### 3.3.2 Meeting the "needs"

The argument we presented above highlighted the growing realisation that dissemination of knowledge cannot be confined to schools and colleges alone. It has to be extended beyond the campus. The adult must be able to return to education as and when he feels the need to do so. Education, therefore, is changing from an institution-centered to a student-centered activity. In the context of modern societies a once-for-all education, thus, is no longer viable. Economic, technological and social changes and the changes in the system of values entail a system of continuing education whereby the individual can upgrade himself from time to time. The manifold needs of the society, therefore, should reconcile with the educational process in a manner that will increase academic freedom without proving self-destructive.

We shall now look at the weak assumption with which the traditional universities function.

The traditional universities function with the assumption that young men and women are motivated mainly by their academic interests and, thus, tend to ignore or diminish the role of career prospects. Hence the urgency about the problem. Yet another dimension to this problem of mismatch between educational assumptions and career prospects arises from the prohibitive costs involved in setting up and running a university. Considering the exorbitant costs involved, it is simply not possible to be able to provide as many universities as are needed to provide education to all. Conversely, this also works to the detriment of the existing university system. For instance, funds may not be available in the required quantity. Furthermore, teaching posts and chairs generally remain unfilled for years together and research projects may be held up for want of funds.

Gradually the quality of the teaching staff suffers. Further, classes may not be held regularly, meaningful contact between the teacher and students may not be possible and strong intellectual stimulation may not be effected. The result will be not only a fall in academic standards but also staff/student ratios will tend to deteriorate. (As a result, the first rate researchers are attracted to western countries where facilities for advanced research are available relatively easily.)

It is with considerations such as these in mind that a distance learning system can be evaluated in the present context. Apart from the comparatively low costs, it is a plurality of interests and needs that the open learning system can fulfil. It is time, then, that the high fertility rate of distance education—something that is reflected in its more flexible arrangement—and its ability to cater to a variety of demands was taken note of.

The open learning system can, thus, operate on two levels:

i) It can provide traditional courses in a more capsular form and allow for individual variations in programming.

ii) It can provide a variety of post-experience and in-service courses that are more geared to the requirements of the adults and of society in general.

**Check Your Progress 1**

List the four major objectives which define the functions and socio-academic relevance of an educational system.

**Notes:** a) Space is given below for your answer.
b) Compare your answer with the one given at the end of this Unit (p. 44).

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## 3.4 DISTANCE EDUCATION: AN ACADEMIC DISCIPLINE

Having thus built up a valid perspective of distance education it is time we discussed distance education as an academic discipline. Now we shall look at how efficient this compatible system of education is in fulfilling the objectives that define the functions of an educational system. In keeping with what has been stated in section 3.2 certain key questions arise which should be answered to legitimise the nomenclature 'discipline' to distance education. We shall further elaborate on the concept of distance education as a discipline in Block 1, DE 2. The key questions to be answered are:

i) Does distance education impart skills?
ii) Can it, by severely minimising the method of oral instruction as a primary instructional medium turn out a really cultivated society?
iii) Can it help advance knowledge?
vi) Can it promote a rational, secular view of man and of human culture without the kind of interaction provided for in the formal system?

Obviously, these questions clearly call for close attention and considerable discussion if distance education is to be accepted as an academic discipline and a permanent innovation in the educational system of the contemporary world. We shall take up each one of the questions and discuss it comprehensively.

### 3.4.1 Imparting 'skills'

The society is naturally concerned with this question [see item (i) above] if it is to finally give its approval to the system of distance education. This question is significant also because the distance learning system does not rely only upon oral instruction, and hence does not work with that kind of socio-academic interaction which is part of the formal system.

Though distance education depends mostly on the written word, the role of the spoken word is not wholly discarded. Being a multi-media system of education, the distance mode of teaching/learning imparts instruction through electronic media too. A basic learning of skills is, thus, inherent in distance education.

For our purpose, we shall divide skills into broadly three categories:

i) Communication skills (listening, reading, writing, and oral skills),
ii) Intellectual skills (simple reasoning abilities), and
iii) Specialised skills (scientific and technological abilities as well as management skills).

**Communication skills**

In fact, distance education system provides ample provisions for the distance learners to communicate, though mainly through the written word, with the distance tutors or institutions. Having read through the course materials the students are expected to respond to the assignment questions sent to them. (Usually, the submission of assignments is made compulsory in this system).

**Intellectual skills**

These skills are presupposed in the course design. Sufficient demands can be made upon the student who may at the same time be permitted to pace his learning programme. However, a point of some importance may be made here. Distance education programmes are bound to function in a somewhat different existential situation where the student is more immediately concerned about his ability to support himself and is thus likely to make informed choices of courses. It is this feasibility that gives him stronger motivation to study. It can be argued that intellectual stimulation would produce a more promising response in him than it would in a student who is part of the traditional universities.

**Specialised skills**

Such skills pose problems of a logistic nature. They concern the teaching of science and technology and those areas where an insistence on project work is considered

desirable. Certain solutions do suggest themselves such as practical kits in the case of basic science. There are other solutions too such as week-end practicals or summer schools where laboratorial supplementation may be possible. One can also think in terms of apprentice programmes with the active participation of industry. These problems are by no means intractable. So they call for a good deal of innovation and considerable coordination.

At this juncture, let us distinguish between a 'higher' and a 'lower' level of education.

The 'lower level' education will consist of traditional courses with suitable modification in so far as their administration/monitoring is concerned and these will provide education in the fundamentals. There is no harm in retaining the traditional arts, commerce and science streams or integrate these into a common stream with adequate modification to effect distance teaching/learning with multiple choice, monitor student progress and award degree on a credit-earning basis. Thus, a student might be allowed to opt for two disciplines at an elementary level at a time, and over a minimum period of three years complete at least six disciplines, along with six more at a somewhat more advanced and specialised level, to be able to earn his first degree.

At the 'higher level', a variety of courses will have to be offered. These will consist of in-service and post-experience courses that will assume a basic knowledge of the discipline/area, seek to further updating knowledge/skill levels, and provide the adult learners an opportunity for continuing their education. These courses may include instructional packages giving the latest information on relevant disciplines such as astronomy, chemistry, sociology, anthropology, economics, etc. Such courses include discussion at a fairly sophisticated level and lead—once again through a credit-earning system—for a post-graduate degree.

We should not, however, overlook the problems which would arise from the general conservative attitude of the society. The problem which deserves our attention is whether a distance student will be employable in the teaching profession or for that matter any other profession on par with a student from the formal system. However, we should be able to say that a correspondence student is in no way inferior to his counterpart at the conventional institution. Our discussions in Units 1&2 will give us adequate support.

**Check Your Progress 2**

In about 15 lines describe how distance education fulfils the objective of imparting skills.

**Notes:** a) Space is given below for your answer.
b) Compare your answer with the one given at the end of this Unit (p. 44).

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## 3.4.2 Building a cultivated society

Apart from furthering a more professional understanding of social/economic roles, distance education can help significantly in the evolution of a learning society. The possibility of taking a course and of updating information level at any time in a person's life is more than likely to promote a professional attitude towards one's social role. Consider the case of a general medical practitioner who, without having to go on leave, can take a course in order to learn about the latest diagnostic practices and the principles behind the newer formulations in drugs. Such a course would foster in him a more professional attitude, besides adding to his efficiency. And such a task would be accomplished within limited time, limited resources and limited commitments. In other words, in spite of several constraints, distance education strategies would certainly help us move one step nearer to a more self-conscious, professional and a learning society.

Hence it is hardly necessary to justify that distance education leads to a general improvement and transformation of the learner and through the learner the society as a whole. By initiating him into subjects and areas which are valuable in themselves, the system will turn out more cultivated persons whose powers of reasoning are likely to be more sophisticated than these were before the learner sought studentship under distance education. And, since distance education can act without the restraining condition of numbers, the system can reach out to very large groups and thus bring about the desired change in a very short period.

**Check Your Progress 3**

Say in about 10 lines how distance education can transform an ordinary society into a cultivated society.

**Notes:** a) Space is given below for your answer.
b) Compare your answer with the one given at the end of this Unit (p. 44).

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## 3.4.3 Advancing knowledge

The question whether distance education can lead to research and add to the growth of knowledge through research is being answered here. The kind of research that will be entailed by the distance education programme concerns the designing and selection/innovation of courses. This research can be very fruitful as it will have to concern itself with continually modifying and updating courses and will provide the basic dynamism to the distance education system.

Consider the following.

You would have noticed, by this time, that by itself distance education is a socio-academic activity—an activity that:

i) has to develop not only new insights into but also new ways of explaining and achieving the educational aims of different courses required by distance learners; these aims, mostly, may pertain to cognitive, psycho-motor and/or affective domains. However, it does underscore the fact that the variety of courses offered by an open university—academic courses, refresher and updating courses, training

courses, general awareness courses, etc.—will demand unusual mixes of these aims, and therefore each course will have to be designed and presented differently,

ii) must be based on investigations and insights into the study habits of individual learners, the processes of learning, teaching and effective academic communication,

iii) assesses and then exploits the differing strengths and weaknesses of different educational media—the print, the audio and video materials, oral communication, communication by correspondence, telephone, etc.—for purposes of both the cost and the pedagogic effectiveness of the types of courses being offered,

iv) plans two-way feedback extensively for purposes of reducing misunderstanding in students, failure of courses, the difficulties caused by the variations in student abilities and other difficulties caused by the failure of postal services at times, the private problems of a distance learner, the unsympathetic attitude of a tutor, etc.

v) makes use of investigations and insights into the systems and strategies of information processing for purposes of promoting more effective teaching materials and thereby discarding the less effective ones.

The items (i-v) presented above give us a broad outline of the research activities that are basic to distance teaching as a discipline.

### 3.4.4 Instilling the secular view of man

More specifically, distance education—and this includes its fuller development including the use of audio-visual supplementation and, gradually the channelling of radio/TV network—will promote in the individual those basic abilities that form a necessary part of an adult in a modern industrial society.

**What are these basic abilities?**

i) ability to support himself or herself,

ii) ability to make informed choices about life, including career, religion, politics, life-style and general attitudes, and

iii) ability to decide what is and what is not morally acceptable.

Corresponding to each of these, a person's education must provide him with:

i) sufficient skills to obtain work,

ii) general education giving a reasonable understanding of the nature of man and the world, and

iii) education in morality.

It may be possible, at this point, to say that a distance education system, when properly and fully developed, leads to a furtherance of those interests that are peculiar to an open society. By providing education to all, it brings about de-elitisation of the educational process. And by catering to the needs of school/college dropouts, distance education can almost eliminate academic isolation of those who have been deprived of education, for whatever reasons. This egalitarianism is extremely significant and is based on the view that no individual can be judged once-for-all by the educational process just as an individual cannot be given a once-for-all education.

Thus, distance education is placed in such a position that it can take on a precious responsibility of offering diverse courses throughout an individual's life.

It also ensures the spread of rationality and a common human culture based on values that arise out of learning and professionalism. Distance education is thus a highly potent weapon in a developing society that is anxious to bring about egalitarianism through the educational process.

In contrast with this system of education, the educational structure that is prevalent now tends to be autocratic and coercive. The manner in which the formal university structure functions in some of the developing societies leaves much to be desired. In these societies, universities were set up quite early and often by the ruling Western societies. These universities tend to ape Western universities and often turn out products that are more suited to Western societies. What is, however, the most abominable part of these universities is that they are wary of giving to the student any real measure of academic freedom. For instance, there is generally a great deal of restriction on choice of subjects/disciplines and these are such formidable barriers that students often fall upon courses of study only through the pressure the system exerts and not through any degree of voluntary choice. Thus, a student who may wish to change course midstream finds it an impossibility and is compelled to continue with a course in a listless manner.

It should be mentioned here that those universities that resisted the influence of colonialism were able to define their objectives more clearly and hence avoided this rather lop-sided development.

It is here that distance education as a system is in a position to offer flexibility in course curricula. It can cut through the heavily ritualised manner of functioning of the formal system. Education can become a more vital experience, giving to the learner a chance to alter his/her existential situation and hence perception of society. In effect, distance education can reduce significantly the constraints to development that originate and arise out of the formal educational system. That this alters the historical experience of a society makes distance education a basis for revolution.

By altering the existing social stratification through educational restructuring, it is possible to alter significantly the developmental experience of a society. This is particularly relevant in a developing society. In other words, it is only when one perceives education as a future-oriented programme that one is able to link it up with the process of development.

**Assumptions**

The following major assumptions emerge out of this argument:

i) Education is very heavily conditioned by constraints and compromises of the past and thus does not easily respond to new demands and to changes in society. An educational system can achieve a high degree of autonomy and social insulation under certain conditions and can grow indifferent to the world around it.

ii) The responsiveness of education to social, economic and political demands depends largely upon the type of society and the kind of development it permits. (From this point of view, one can see the educational system in India reflecting the general conservatism of the Indian society. This may not permit any radical change unless the values of leading socio-political groups overcome the constraints of the past and conceive of new options for the future. Thus, a degree obtained through distance education may carry a stigma in Indian society for quite sometime until the overall social framework is amended through political pressure. However, the way it gains currency indicates that distance education has come in a big way in India).

iii) There is a special responsibility on the academician in so far as he has to spell out a vision of a better future of an evolving society in which education is going to be widely available and will be linked to the development and participation of all individuals in the general social growth.

It is in this light that distance education can be seen also as an important declaration of policy. Policy in education does not reflect only a concern with resources and priorities. It is more deeply related to questions related to social demands. These demands cannot be separated from the interests of dominant groups with vested interests and their political power and from the network of international aid. Thus, a programme for education cannot be discussed except within the social ends it reflects.

Besides reflecting the social needs, educational planning, to be realistic, should take into account not only the choices available but also the constraints which cannot be easily overcome, and the means through which the ends have to be realised. Distance education provides just such an alternative. It accepts the challenge of existing constraints on resources, buildings for schools and colleges, funds, availability of manpower, etc. and seeks to mobilise available resources to provide the much needed instructional package. It is in that sense that distance education is an answer to a genuine need and is a significant policy change in education.

**Check Your Progress 4**

Write, in not more than 10 lines, how distance education succeeds in instilling a common secular view of man.

**Notes:** a) Space is given below for your answer.
b) Compare your answer with the one given at the end of this Unit (p. 44).

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The foregoing discussion, thus, shows that distance education has the relevant credentials for being considered a discipline by itself and reinforces the fact that it is a system which is self-reliant and autonomous.

How sciences look at a discipline will be discussed in Block 1, DE 2.

## 3.5 LET US SUM UP

What have we said in this Unit?

We said that the academic and social relevance of an educational system is, normally, adjudged by the objectives which it operates with. We also identified four major objectives that define the functions of an educational system.

The objectives we identified are:
i) to impart skills,
ii) to develop the powers of mind,
iii) to advance knowledge, and
iv) to transmit the secular view of man.

We, then, evolved a more valid perspective of distance education and considered its legitimacy with reference to that perspective. Having given this perspective, we discussed comprehensively whether or not distance education fulfils each of the educational objectives mentioned above. We eventually drew the conclusion that distance education does fulfil the objectives satisfactorily. Distance education can, therefore, be considered an academic discipline.

**Check Your Progress: Model Answers**

1 An educational system should be able to:
   i) give instruction in skills,
   ii) develop the powers of mind and bring about a cultivated society,
   iii) advance knowledge, and
   iv) transmit a common human culture and thereby instil the secular view of man.

2 Distance education encompasses the three domains (i.e. cognitive, psycho-motor and affective) which subsume skills of learning.

   i) **Cognitive domain:** Access devices i.e., glossaries, exercises etc., which predominate distance teaching materials help develop independent reading and comprehension skills of the students.
   ii) **Psycho-motor domain:** Distance education takes care of this domain by providing the students access to laboratory facilities—especially for science subjects.
   iii) **Affective domain:** The demands of this domain are met through personal contact programmes, counselling, tutor-comments, audio/video programmes and by adopting a personalised approach to course materials.

3 Distance education provides opportunity for updating information and life-long education. It, thus, promotes one's professionl attitude towards one's social roles and leads to a general awareness in the learner. This awareness, in turn, leads to a common improvement and transformation of the society as a whole.

4 By providing educational opportunities to a majority of the population, distance education brings about de-elitisation of the educational process. Thus, its wide 'coverage' ensures the spread of rationality and a common human culture based on values that arise out of learning.

# UNIT 4 MICRO AND MACRO ISSUES

**Contents**


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4.2 Micro Issues
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  4.2.3 Student support services
4.3 Macro Issues
  4.3.1 Distance teaching institutes: the present state
  4.3.2 Financial support to distance teaching directorates
4.4 Developmental Issues in Distance Education
4.5 Let Us Sum Up


## 4.0 OBJECTIVES

In this Unit, we have attempted to discuss those issues which are directly related to pedagogy (i.e. micro-issues), and those 'outside pedagogy' (i.e. macro-issues), as they are, with a view to establishing the fact that besides 'academic inputs', the currently prevailing socio-educational climate contributes a major share to the success/failure of distance education.

After having completed this Unit, we hope, you will be able to argue that:

- the need for a 're-thinking', with regard to the 'academic inputs' which have been and are in practice in the distance teaching institutes, is imperative, and
- the academic biases coupled with social prejudices are the factors that deny pedagogic prestige to distance education.

## 4.1 INTRODUCTION

Having had a probe into the worldwide spread of distance education (See Block 1, Course DE 1) and the philosophies that underline the distance mode of teaching/ learning, (See Block 2, Course DE 1) you should also be aware of the impediments that try to mar the growth of this mode of academic enterprise. That distance education has withstood the test of time and is gaining popularity, and of late, is becoming a sought after mode of instruction can never be denied. Nevertheless, the impediments that come into the way of distance education system are no less important and so they cannot conveniently be ignored or overlooked.

We have touched upon these 'impediments' i.e. 'micro-issues' and 'macro-issues' with particular reference to India. Obviously, our discussion will cover all the directorates of distance/correspondence courses in the country, i.e. their activities, concerns and difficulties.

We shall mention here two significant points.

i) We have presented the 'issues' as they are, i.e. as seen from the point of view of the existing distance teaching directorates. (Some of these directorates have been in existence for more than two decades.) We are looking at the issues from their viewpoint, as such a viewpoint is of topical relevance here.
ii) We have not resolved the issues. Neither did we intend to do so. By implication, we do not have concrete solutions to these issues in the foreseeable future. In the course of time, perhaps, it will not be impossible to find fitting answers to each of these issues. The possible solutions suggested by the existing distance teaching directorates in order to rectify the 'micro' and 'macro-issues', however, are not ignored.

Our primary concern, as an apex body, in this regard would be to deal with the

'micro-issues' so as to improve the standards of the 'academic inputs'. We will be talking about these inputs in greater detail in Courses 2, 3 and 4. The suggestions put forward by the existing directorates—if taken note of and carefully looked into—would help minimise considerably the educational hazards which the 'macro-issues' may otherwise lead to.

## 4.2 MICRO ISSUES

By 'micro-issues' we mean the issues related to the 'academic inputs' which are generally being used in the distance teaching institutes to disseminate instruction. The following items constitute the 'academic inputs':

i) Students' Assignment-responses,
ii) Course Materials (Print and Audio-visual), and
iii) Personal Contact Programmes.

It should not be, however, construed that these inputs have been uniformly used in all the distance teaching institutes. Nevertheless, it should be noted that all these institutes invariably use print materials. 'Print', thus, plays a pivotal role in the distance mode of teaching and learning in India. Now, we shall take up each one of the inputs in the same order as given above. The discussion of the 'academic inputs' brings to light the issues pertaining to them.

### 4.2.1 Students' assignment-responses

The students' assignment-responses are one of the major inputs through which the distance teaching institutes normally communicate with the students. That is, tutor comments on the assignments give the students the necessary feedback. Academic communication, thus, is effected. We have discussed this issue extensively in Unit 1, Block 3 (Course DE 2). Usually the submission of assignments is made compulsory in a majority of the distance teaching institutes. Some directorates which have experimented with compulsory submission of assignments were forced to give up this practice, for the following reasons:

i) students' resistance, since tutorials are not compulsory in regular colleges/departments,
ii) inadequacy of the staff to correct the response sheets and send them back to the students,
iii) delay in submission of response sheets from the students, from the armed forces, backward regions and from other far-flung areas, and
iv) the failure of the directorates to send reading materials in time so that the students could submit the response sheets well in time.

It has also been noted that in case the response sheets sent by the students are not returned within a reasonable period of time, the students lose interest and consequently they stop submitting response sheets thereafter. Secondly, if the teachers correcting the response sheets do not give concrete suggestions for improvement, the students feel that this is a futile exercise. Therefore, it is necessary that the submission of response sheets which is very useful as feedback, should be streamlined. Adequate quantum of staff be provided for the purpose, and the submission and return of the response sheets to the students be made more regular. The situation as it prevails in India today is not encouraging and leaves much to be desired.

### 4.2.2 Course materials (print and electronic media)

A major chunk of the course materials of any distance education programme in India is normally covered by print materials. Thus, it is obvious that the distance teaching directorates involve themselves in the production of a large quantity of print materials for various courses. However identical the course content/syllabus may be each one of these directorates prepares its own materials in order to maintain its identity and standards.

It should not be, however, interpreted that the academic and distance teaching directorates are the sole agencies which are engaged in preparing course materials. By implication, these directorates more often than not, might as well depend on outside

sources—course writers from outside the directorate structure—for materials. It should be mentioned here that inadequate academic infrastructure is the chief factor which forces the directorates to depend on the course materials prepared outside the directorate system.

Those directorates which have to find course material writers outside the system normally pay Rs. 100-200 for a lesson of about 5000 words, depending on the status of the person engaged for preparing the course materials. Eminent persons, who have sound footing in their own field of study, are generally reluctant to undertake this task, either because of the fact that they hardly have any time to spare for such work, or because of the disincentive of the trivial remuneration. (Added to this, perhaps, is the fact that a majority of the senior academics feel diffident to write course materials.) Consequent upon these facts many distance teaching directorates are coerced to depend on mediocre course writers. The courses thus prepared very often fail to bring to light the effectiveness of the print medium.

Obviously, what we are suggesting is that competent course writers should be approached for preparing effective materials. Having identified competent writers, the distance teaching directorates should not hesitate to pay a decent remuneration. For example, the Indira Gandhi National Open University, New Delhi, has broken new grounds in raising the rates of remuneration for writing of course materials to Rs. 800-1,000 per unit of nearly 5000 words. This stems from the fact that investment in the preparation of course materials is mostly a one-time fixed investment which is bound to yield better return over a particular period of time. In other words, it is much better to pay higher rates of remuneration once and get the course materials printed for 4-5 years, rather than paying a very low remuneration to a course writer and get sub-standard reading materials printed year after year.

It must not be difficult to pay a decent remuneration to the course writers, if the distance teaching directorates are given adequate financial support.

**But, have the directorates been given sufficient financial support?**

The distance teaching directorates are not given adequate funds. As a consequence, the potentialities of distance education remain unexploited. The inadequate funding of these institutes also suggests that distance education is denied the academic status it deserves in the society (we shall talk about the problem of status in greater details in Section 4.3).

Besides print materials, the distance teaching directorates, by and large, make use of media support—radio, television, video cassettes, etc.

As far as India is concerned, radio talks have been widely used. With the co-operation of AIR (All India Radio), the directorates broadcast the lectures of eminent personalities. As far as possible the directorates choose a convenient time for the students to listen to these lectures and benefit from them. To illustrate, we shall take the example of the School of Correspondence Courses and Continuing Education, the University of Delhi. It broadcasts nearly 700 talks per year from the Delhi station of the AIR. Considered to be very useful by distance students, these talks are broadcast both in English and Hindi.

Many other directorates too use radio for broadcasting lectures on diverse subjects. In spite of the academic usefulness, radio for academic purposes is not completely devoid of limitations.

**What are the major drawbacks of radio lectures?**

To serve our immediate purpose, we have identified three major drawbacks. They are:

i) The specified time for radio talks may not be convenient to the heterogenous population. (This does not, however, underscore the efforts of the directorates and the broadcasting stations to fix a time which will be convenient to a majority of the distance students.)
ii) However mature/adult a person, 'animation' always has its own impact on him. Radio talks being restricted to auditory channel may not capture and sustain the attention of the students. (This is to emphasise the fact that the attention-span of

the students may not be always uniform. Of course, the same argument is applicable to other media too.)

iii) Being a heterogenous group the degree of concentration of the students may not be identical—a student who has a lower level of concentration cannot playback the talk and thus assimilate at his own pace.

Notwithstanding these limitations, we can safely say that nearly 30% of the students benefit from radio broadcasts. What we need, perhaps, is a means to effectively present these broadcasts. For making radio broadcasts more useful, the following are the two primary factors which should be looked into carefully:

i) the persons chosen for giving radio talks should have academic background, besides being conversant with the subject, and
ii) the topics chosen for radio programmes should deserve audio presentation.

To extend this argument further, the distance teaching directorates should be able to decide which bit of the course material should be presented in what medium. For instance, some topics may require the help of maps and charts to effectively present the matter. For such subjects—mathematics, accountancy etc.—radio broadcasts may not be advisable. These topics can be effectively dealt with by television broadcasts or video cassettes. It should be mentioned here that, so far TV has not been used effectively as the medium of instruction at the level of higher education in India.

The point which should be emphasised here is that instead of the radio programmes and the use of TV, current thinking is veering round the idea that the distance education directorates should make their own audio and video cassettes. While the preparation of the audio cassettes is relatively simple from the technical point of view, that of video cassettes may require a great degree of skill and investment in the form of studio facilities and engagement of the core staff both for script writing and for photography. Though expensive, for academic purposes video cassettes may be strongly recommended.

The question whether or not the students can afford to get hold of some of the cassettes (audio/video) may be answered if the directorates have enough funding to provide the students with audio/video libraries. The students will, thus, be able to make use of these materials.

In this context, it may be observed that we do not place excessive faith on the use of mass media as the sole means of learning. It may also be pointed out that audio and video materials may not become effective substitutes for the print. They may be either supplementary or complementary to each other. It does not, however, underrate the potentialities of media-support. There may be courses which need to be given through electronic media only.

### 4.2.3 Student support services

In this sub-section we shall be touching upon the prominent support services like contact programmes, study centres and laboratory facilities.

**Contact Programmes**

Contact programme is generally considered to be a significant academic input in distance teaching directorates in India. These programmes are arranged with a view to providing opportunities to the students/participants to have interaction with their tutors and peers. Besides offering academic benefits, the contact programmes establish a useful rapport between the distance teaching directorate and the distance students. Obviously, this helps the students shun away their feeling of loneliness, which otherwise they may suffer from.

In the contact programmes, normally, major issues are taken up and discussed. This assumes, in fact, that the students/participants would have thoroughly gone through the materials sent to them and come to attend the contact programme with specific doubts to be clarified. The duration for such programmes being limited, it is impossible and also impractical to have a sentence by sentence discussion.

**Is the attendance at contact programmes made compulsory?**

Except for a few professional courses like Diploma in Library Science, Bachelor/ Master of Education etc. generally for other courses, attendance at contact

programmes is optional. Some distance teaching directorates do not even conduct these programmes for various administrative reasons. The academic effectiveness of such contact programmes is viewed differently by different directorates—some directorates make contact programmes an integral part of their academic endeavour while some others tend to ignore the programmes.

The major factor for this kind of indifference to contact programmes is the simple fact that the directorates suffer either from poor financial support or from inadequate academic infrastructure. By implication, 'under-nourished' directorates should be given proper attention.

Now let us look at the constraints which are confronted by the directorates in conducting, and the students in attending the contact programmes.

i) **Inadequate financial support:** Usually personal contact programmes are organised at certain places where the student-concentration should be at least 200. Subsequently, these programmes get restricted to a limited number of places and as a consequence many students may not be able to profit from such programmes. Given enough financial support, the contact programmes may be arranged at a reasonable number of places.
ii) **Difficulty in getting leave:** In-service students find it difficult to get leave from their employers for attending the contact programmes, the duration of these programmes being a major cause.
iii) **Problems of accommodation, board and transport:** Generally, the distance teaching directorates may not be able to provide these facilities to the students. The transport authorities do not grant travel concession to the students who come for the programmes.

We should say here that what we have referred to is the tip of the iceberg. However, these are the major problems which need special mention.

The items we listed above—especially item (i)—reveal that the duration of the personal contact programme is also a matter which needs closer scrutiny.

**Duration of personal contact programmes**

The correspondence students appreciate the importance of the personal contact programme as a very useful input for improving their understanding of the subject. Consequently, some of them insist on longer duration but some on shorter duration. Directorates of distance education in India have varied durations of personal contact programme ranging from 2-3 days to 20-30 days in a year. It is viewed that a 2-3 day programme is too short to serve any meaningful purpose. But it may be contended that a 2-3 day contact programme can be made effective. It mainly depends on the course content. Depending on the subject needs, 14 working days extendable up to 20 days in the case of under-graduate programmes and 30 days in the case of a post-graduate programme may be useful for the students. Of course, it presupposes that the students who are employed are being granted leave. Providing the students with TA/DA will solve the problems of accommodation, boarding and transport. [See items (ii) and (iii), above]. But is that possible?

**Laboratory facilities and library-cum-study centres**

Distance teaching directorates which offer courses in science and technology confront the problem of providing laboratory facilities to the students.

For this purpose the directorates either set up their own laboratories or seek the help of other institutions which have laboratory facilities. The students may avail themselves of these laboratory facilities on holidays and week-ends. The strategy of using experimental kits is in the offing. (It should be mentioned here that some open universities outside India are using this strategy.) Keeping in mind the significant role which the practicals play with regard to courses in science and technology, it is necessary for the distance teaching directorates to have laboratory facilities.

Distance teaching directorates also require the setting up of library-cum-study centres, which should make library facilities and teacher guidance accessible to the students. Some directorates in the country have set up library-cum-study centres but they are more in the nature of libraries and not in the nature of library-cum-study centres. The main problems faced in this connection are:

i) The directorates do not have the resources to appoint teachers who can be made available for the guidance of the students.
ii) Adequate grants for the library-cum-study centres are not available to the directorates, and therefore, reading room facilities cannot be provided to a large number of students. However, the experiment of library-cum-study centres at the University of Delhi indicates that a very large proportion of students intend to make use of this facility.

We will talk about these problems [(i) & (ii)] in greater details in Course 4.

**Check Your Progress 1**

Mention the two main factors, which disturb the **academic** growth of distance education in India today.

**Notes:** a) Space is given below for your answer.
b) Compare your answer with the one given at the end of this Unit (p. 54).

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The discussion of the micro-issues leads us to the conclusion that the directorates should have enough financial support and sound academic infrastructure in order that the issues may be adequately resolved. Now we shall look into the 'macro-issues'.

## 4.3 MACRO ISSUES

The educational system in India is passing through a period of transition. On the one hand, the establishment of Indira Gandhi National Open University has fulfilled the long-felt need to have an apex institution to act as a pace-setter and a coordination institution in respect of distance education. On the other, educational biases coupled with social prejudices look down upon distance education. This does not, however, slacken the need for an effective educational systems i.e. distance education system, as some State Governments have already established and some are thinking of establishing open universities so as to cater to the needs of a vast number of clientele. This being the state of affairs, the main contention has been that these newly set up distance teaching directorates ignore the experience of the existing directorates. And efforts are being made at the Central level to bring the existing directorates within the fold of the Open University structure. This stems from the fact that the existing directorates attached to the conventional universities are deprived of the freedom of developing their own syllabi, methods of instruction, etc. In other words, a 'dual structure' (i.e. independent Open Universities to impart distance education and distance teaching directorates attached to the existing universities) has come into being. In the long run, such a 'dual structure' may not promote the cause of distance education in the country.

We will be discussing two identifiable impediments in the development of the distance teaching directorates which are attached to the conventional universities in the following sub-sections.

### 4.3.1 Distance teaching institutes: The present state

Bogged down by their problems, very little time is devoted by the conventional universities to promote the distance mode of education. Academics at conventional universities in India still hover around the discussions whether or not a particular course is amenable through the distance mode of teaching, whereas that every kind of knowledge can be transmitted through the distance mode of education is repeatedly proved elsewhere. (However, it will take us some time before we clearly see the potentialities of distance education!) Consequent upon this, the distance teaching

institutes attached to the conventional universities are considered to be 'inferior' in the academic hierarchy.

Since they have not been considered as universities or deemed-universities, they can neither frame their syllabi nor innovate their system of examination. They have no option but to follow the syllabi of the traditional universities and adhere to their examination pattern. Added to this is the popular fallacy that certificates/diplomas or degrees obtained after taking distance education courses can have academic and social credibility only if the students concerned have gone through the same course content and followed the same examination pattern as are prevailing in the conventional educational institutions. Although this is a very naive view, no effort has been made to dispel it. Rather, with the present university structure, it is not possible to dispense with it. By implication, the distance teaching directorates do not have an identity of their own. They are treated as mere appendages to the conventional universities.

Moreover, the operators of the distance education system are given a trivial role to play with regard to decision-making. In other words, the teachers and the non-academic staff of the directorates are hardly associated with the process of decision-making. The formal bodies of universities play a dominant role in taking decisions regarding the problems in the distance teaching directorates. This asymmetry destroys all the initiatives taken by these directorates for devising innovations. It only underlines the absence of autonomy in decision-making pertaining to the operation and development of distance education in the country.

**Check Your Progress 2**

We have said that the existing distance teaching directorates have been treated as mere appendages to the conventional universities. Give an example to substantiate the above statement.

**Notes:** a) Space is given below for your answer.
b) Compare your answer with the one given at the end of the Unit (p. 54).

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## 4.3.2 Financial support to distance teaching directorates

Although as part of the National Education Policy, distance education technique has been accepted as a viable alternative and an economical technique for reaching the deprived sections, adequate support in the form of human and physical infrastructure has not been provided so far.

In general, it has been found that the ratio of cost per student between the on-campus students and the distance students is 3:1. Besides, the average cost per student for the on-campus students in Delhi colleges in 1983-84 was Rs. 3,187 and the average fee paid by the student was Rs. 280. The subsidy per student was Rs. 2,907. As against this, in distance education cost per student works out to be Rs. 613 for the year 1983-84 and nearly 45% of the cost is being paid by the student. The quantum of state support is too meagre for the development of a meaningful distance education system.

Keeping the norm of one-third of the cost in regular university system, it would be appropriate if Rs. 1,000 per student is developed as the norm of expenditure per student in distance education, out of which nearly 25 per cent should be realised in the form of fee income and State subsidy should be about Rs. 750 per student. It is necessary that certain norms of expenditure are developed and revised periodically so

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that this alternative technique of education may develop a proper infrastructure and an effective delivery system.

Distance teaching directorates do not enjoy financial autonomy to run their programmes or bring in innovations necessary for imparting instructions through the distance mode of teaching/learning.

It would be appropriate to say that most of the programmes are being given up because of inadequate financial support. This is not to say that there should be no limit on the financial autonomy of distance teaching directorates but that certain norms of making provision for financial assistance should be developed.

The emphasis should shift from competitive approach to one of complementarity and optimisation of resources. This requires coordinated planning of distance education at the national level.

## 4.4 DEVELOPMENTAL ISSUES IN DISTANCE EDUCATION

Having touched upon the 'micro' and 'macro' issues, we shall now devote a section to discuss the developmental issues in distance education. For the development of distance education, the following issues deserve attention.

**Academic staffing**

It is vitally necessary that correspondence directorates should have an independent and competent faculty of their own. This should comprise professors, readers and lecturers. While recruiting such faculty, special aptitudes for writing course materials should receive prime consideration among other significant prerequisites of a distance teacher. (We have devoted Course DE 2 for discussing the prerequisites of distance teaching). As far as possible, this faculty should undertake the preparation of course materials. Unfortunately, many directorates are not adequately staffed by people suitable for such tasks. Some eminent persons in the universities and some in the UGC adversely criticise the quality of reading materials produced by correspondence directorates. They would quote the excellence of the materials produced by the British Open University, but they would not touch upon the fact that the British Open University is being serviced by 1500 full-time members of the teaching faculty. It is, therefore, hightime that the UGC revised its guidelines for the staffing pattern.

**Non-academic staffing**

For a distance teaching directorate, dedicated non-academic staff is necessary for developing an effective 'delivery' system. No serious thought has yet been given to this problem. Moreover, no norms for supporting-staff have been developed so far.

The support-staff is required to despatch course materials, to process assignments so that teachers can assess them, to organise library-cum-study centres, to prepare cassette tapes of lectures, to develop CCTV (i.e. close circuit TV), to maintain students' records pertaining to admissions, evaluation of assignments and examinations, etc. None of the staff, usually appointed for these tasks, have any specialised training in these areas.

Correspondence course directorates need special staff like proof readers, book producers, cartographers, designers, lesson keepers, etc. Instead of getting their services piecemeal, it is more desirable to have them on the regular payroll of the directorate.

**Payment for contractual services**

An ideal situation for a distance teaching institute is to carry out the entire work within the institute-structure. However, the present UGC norms and university structure do not make adequate provision for such facilities, and, therefore, there is no option but to get the work done on payment by outside academics and non-academics. In this context, the pitifully low norms of payment prescribed by the University/UGC act as impediments in the way of procuring the services of competent

academics and non-academics. There is, therefore, a need to re-examine the norms of payment for contractual services fixed a decade ago.

**Development of library-cum-study centres**

The UGC emphasised in its norms the need for the development of library-cum-study centres for distance students. This idea was aimed at providing, besides course materials supplied by the directorates, access to good books, journals, etc. It was also conceived that tutorial guidance be also provided to students at such centres. This requires the establishment of good buildings with ample seating space and tutorial rooms so that the contact between the teacher and the taught is strengthened.

Academically the idea is sound because the aim is to expose distance students to these facilities in order that they may compete effectively with their counterparts in regular college/university departments. The need for such library-cum-study centres is more intensely felt at the post-graduate level where the student needs extensive reading but the study materials supplied by the directorates are inadequate to meet this need.

**Development of 'software' and 'hardware' to use mass media**

More recently, some experts have been thinking of procuring some hardware to set-up close circuit TV facilities so that educational programmes could be video-taped and taken to the study centres. The University of Poona is making a serious effort to develop CCTV. The UGC Visiting Team while recommending the introduction of under-graduate courses through Marathi medium has also recommended block assistance to set-up CCTV and thus to use the video-tapes for extension of education. This requires some software, supporting staff, and creation of community centres to make the scheme effective. Though it is a good idea, it would certainly require financial support.

**Contact programmes**

Distance education needs to be supported by contact programmes. From an academic point of view, it should be desirable that teachers who prepare teaching materials are associated with contact classes.

For this purpose, teachers of the directorate should have the autonomy to decide the duration and the scheduling of the contact programmes keeping in view the socio-economic characteristics of the students. The directorates should, therefore, function as autonomous bodies in taking decisions in this area. There are subjects for which the students desire and need more contact hours. The directorates should be free to decide the number of contact hours, depending upon the nature of the subject and the needs of the students. The marginal benefit-cost ratio of this expenditure being very high, it is worth making an effort.

**A word of caution**

To reiterate, we have presented here the problems perceived and the possible remedial measures suggested by the existing distance teaching directorates. By implication, our purpose is to create a greater awareness of these issues and not to prescribe any immediate solutions to them. Our immediate concern, however, is to deal with the micro-issues and that we will be doing in Courses 2, 3 and 4.

## 4.5 LET US SUM UP

In this Unit, we said that course materials (print and audio-visual), personal contact programmes, assignments, laboratory facilities, and library-cum-study centres are the academic inputs currently prevalent in the distance teaching directorates in India. Having said this, we identified and discussed the major issues related to these 'inputs'. We also said that print medium plays a dominant role in academic communication.

The tendency has been, and is, to treat the distance teaching directorates as mere appendages to the conventional universities. Consequently, the identity of these directorates is being obfuscated. Inadequate financial support, moreover, handicaps the development and recognition of these directorates.

Finally we presented some suggestions, as perceived by the existing directorates, to satisfactorily resolve the 'micro' and 'macro' issues.

**Check Your Progess: Model Answers**

1 The following are the two main factors which disturb the academic growth of distance education:

   i) weak academic infrastructure, and
   ii) inadequate financial support.

2 The existing distance teaching directorates are regarded neither as universities nor as deemed universities. They are, instead, considered to be parts of conventional universities. As a result 'academic autonomy' is denied to them. That is, these directorates are forced to follow the syllabi and examination pattern of the conventional universities.

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